KISHORE SATSANG
PARICHAY

A Textbook of the Satsang Examinations Series: 8

Kishore Satsang Parichay

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Glossary

Blessings

The youth movement established and nourished by Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj has been expanding at a very rapid pace. With a view to satisfying the aspirations and the thirst for knowledge of the youth joining the organization, and also to enable them to understand and imbibe the principles of Akshar and Purushottam expounded by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the publications division, Swaminarayan Aksharpith, organized under the auspices of Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha, presents a series of books.

Through these books, it is intended to impart systematic, sustained and pure knowledge in simple language on a scholastic basis to children and youth of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. It is hoped that this Sanstha, established by Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj for implementing and propagating the Vedic ideals propounded by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, will, through this activity, spread the ideals and noble traditions of the Sampradaya and through it, the culture and heritage of the Hindu religion.

It is the aim of this project to preach and spread the divine message of Bhagwan Swaminarayan to all corners of the world. We hope that all religious-minded truth-seekers of the Sampradaya and those outside of it, will welcome this activity and extend their fullest co-operation.

In order to encourage children and youths, annual examinations are held based on the curriculum as worked out in these books. Certificates are also awarded to successful candidates. We bless Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Prof. Rameshbhai Dave, Kishorebhai Dave, and all others who have cooperated in the preparation of these books.

Shastri Narayanswarupdasji
(Pramukh Swami Maharaj)
Jai Swaminarayan

Vasant Panchmi
V.S. 2028 (1972 CE)
Atladra

Publisher's Note

The Swaminarayan Sampraday has its unique tradition of worship rituals, festivals and observances. They are based on the Vedic Sanatan (Hindu) Dharma and have been revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan through his teachings and their practical application in his life. It is by following these conventions and commands that the lives of all *satsangis* can be properly moulded. By living according to these traditions devotees can protect themselves from bad company, become ideal *satsangis* and attain ultimate redemption in life.

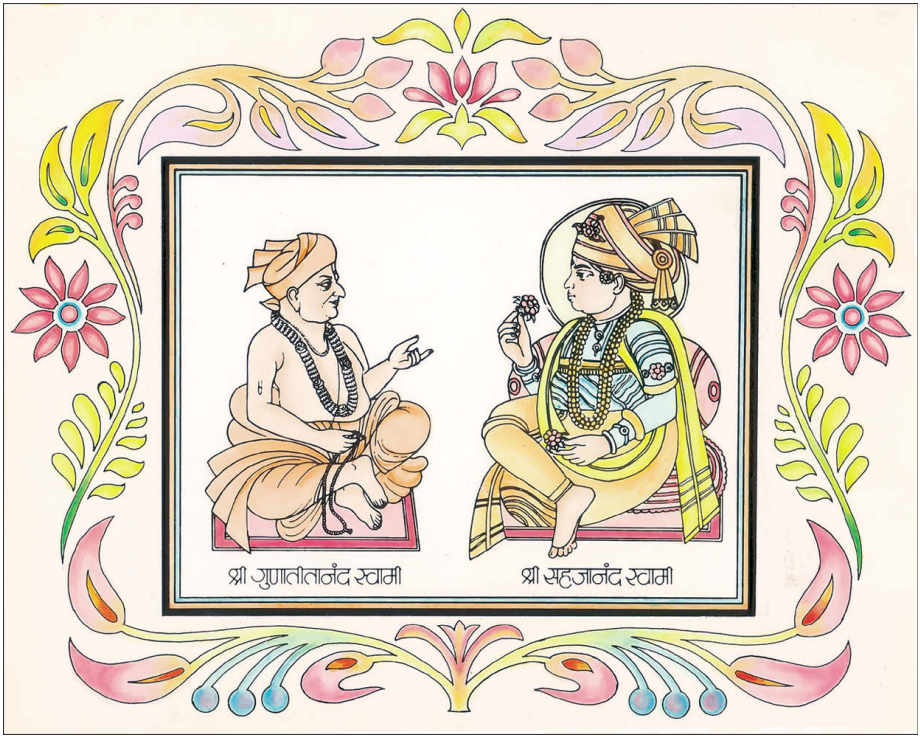
Basic codes of conduct, worship rituals of *satsang,* scriptural talks, life sketches of *paramhansas* and devotees, as well as traditions and history have been briefly presented in this book in a lucid language. This book will provide a greater understanding of and attachment to Satsang.

This publication in English is a translation of the Gujarati book *Kishore Satsang Parichay*.

This book has been designed to serve as part of the curriculum for the Satsang Examinations. More specifically, it is one of the textbooks for the third level examination, Kishore Satsang Parichay.

It is our earnest prayer that all *satsangis* study this book carefully, pass the examinations with flying colours, and above all, derive immense spiritual benefits and please Bhagwan Swaminarayan and guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

- Swaminarayan Aksharpith



Ame sau Swāminā bālak, marishu Swāmine māte;
Ame sau Shrijitanā yuvak, ladishu Shrijine māte...
Nathi dartā nathi kartā, amārā jānni parvā;
Amāre dar nathi koino, ame janmyā chhie marvā...ame 1
Ame ā yagna ārambhyo, balidāno ame daishu;
Amārā Akshar Purushottam, Gunātit jnānne gāishu...ame 2
Ame sau Shriji tanā putro, Akshare vās amāro chhe;
Svadharmi bhasma choli to, amāre kshobh shāno chhe...ame 3
Juo sau motinā Swāmi, na rākhi kai te khāmi;
Pragat Purushottam pāmi, malyā Gunātit Swāmi...ame 4

Translation

Pledge: Ame Sau Swamina Balak...

We are the children of Swami; we will die for him. We are the youths of Shriji Maharaj; we will fight for him. We are fearless; we will not shirk sacrificing our lives, for we are born to die. We have launched this movement and will undergo any suffering. We will sing the praises of Akshar-Purushottam.

We are the sons of Shriji Maharaj; we have our abode in Akshar. Consecrated as we are to *swadharma* (religious faith), we have no apprehension whatsoever. Lord Purushottam and Akshar, Gunatitanand Swami, are with us. We have accomplished our

goal.

1. Shikshapatri

General Precepts, Section 2

In *Kishore Satsang Pravesh,* we studied some of the general precepts in the Shikshapatri. Here we will study those precepts of spirituality, ethics of association and ethics of conduct which a spiritual seeker needs for his spiritual enlightenment.

Spiritual Discrimination

One should not slander or vilify gods, places of pilgrimage, Brahmins, chaste women, sadhus and Vedas nor listen to such talks. Evil-minded and fallen people vilify holy places, *murtis* and scriptures and as a result they and their lineage are destroyed. Know such people as sinners. All contact with atheists and the fallen should be avoided. Shriji Maharaj has commanded this even in the Vachanamrut, Gadhada II 6.

Therefore, never slander or vilify even jokingly. And if some ill-mannered people are indulging in it, one should not listen to them. Understand that the word Veda includes the Vachanamrut, Shikshapatri, Swamini Vato and other scriptures of the Sampraday. So, never criticize nor listen to criticism of these scriptures. By forbidding people from slandering chaste women, Shriji Maharaj has emphasized the value of fidelity in women and thus provided them great protection.

If one passes by a mandir of Shiva and other deities, one should bow down with due reverence, love and folded hands. If one goes for darshan without reverence, one commits offence against the deity (21, 22).

Shriji Maharaj also writes, “My devotees should hold in great reverence the five deities: Vishnu, Shiva, Ganapati, Parvati and Surya” (84).

One should never believe those scriptures which falsely preach against Shriji Maharaj and the previous avatars (incarnations). What is false preaching? It is that they describe Rama and Krishna and other incarnations as human or imaginary and challenge their divinity by using false logic. One should firmly understand that Shriji Maharaj is the supreme Godhead, the fountainhead of all incarnations and he is the cause behind all causes, and Gunatitanand Swami is Anadi Aksharbrahman. God has an eternally divine form and is the all-doer and is always manifest *(pragat)* on earth. Therefore, to call Shriji Maharaj formless or to call him non-doer or to equate him with other incarnations is considered vilification of his divine form.

The language of the scriptures can sometimes cause confusion, therefore, Shriji Maharaj has said that the interpretation of the scriptures should be listened to only from the mouth of the Satpurush (God-realized Sadhu). Only then can the truth be realized. When God is described as *jyotiswarup* it means he does not have a material body, but he does possess an eternally divine body. Therefore, all actions of Shriji Maharaj and manifest guru are divine. In the same manner other incarnations are also

worthy of worship. Therefore, those scriptures which deny the divinity of these incarnations should never be heard or believed (29).

No one should offend gurus and great men with virtues. The guru is also the from of God: *Guru sakshat Parabrahman.* By offending one's guru, one forfeits all one's noble actions and merits (35).

My devotees should honour their guru, a king, an elderly person, one who has renounced, scholars and ascetics, and whenever they arrive, one should rise from one's seat, receive them with respect and offer them seats. They are all worthy of respect.

In an assembly one should not sit with one foot placed on the thigh or with a cloth strapped to both the knees in the presence of the guru, deity or king, because to sit in such a posture amounts to an insult to them. Moreover, one appears ill-mannered (69, 70).

Even if a woman observes all the *niyams* and has true faith in Akshar and Purushottam, men should not listen to her discourses. Nothing lures and binds men more than the company of women or of those men who seek the company of women. That is why Shriji Maharaj has prescribed separate assemblies for men and women. He has said in the Vachanamrut, "Women are devotees but they should not be glorified too much and women devotees in turn should not glorify men too much; they should have equanimity about men, otherwise, they are sure to invite great trouble" (Vachanamrut, Gadhada III 24).

All men devotees going to the mandir daily or on festivals days should not touch women and women should not touch men. After leaving the mandir they should behave appropriately. The sight and touch of women lure one's eyes and as a result causes difficulties (40).

Actions should not be performed without due deliberation. Social duties should be performed after much deliberation and after consulting the Satpurush. But duties relating to religion should be performed immediately. Realizing this body as perishable, all religious duties should be performed immediately. What is to be done tomorrow should be done today and what is to be done in the evening should be done immediately. Death is unpredictable but inevitable. Only dharma accompanies the *jiva* after the death of the body.

Of all donations, imparting one's knowledge to others is the greatest gift (36).

All my devotees should worship God in accordance with the tenets of religion. One should not forsake the practice of dharma even if one's devotion and faith in God are unshakeable. Some devotees do not hesitate to practise unrighteousness under the pretext of knowledge and devotion. As a result, the faith of good people is shaken. One should look to one's deity as the cause of everything and also as the protector and should not give up worshipping him for fear of vilification by the ignorant (37).

My devotees should go on a pilgrimage of Dwarika and other holy places according to their means and should be compassionate towards the poor and the needy. They should also visit Gadhada, Vartal, Ahmedabad, Junagadh, Chhapaiya, Ayodhya and other such holy places where God dwells eternally.

"God always manifests on the earth along with his Akshardham" (Vachanamrut,

Gadhada I 71). In accordance with this principle, *guruhari* Shastriji Maharaj consecrated the *murtis* of Akshar and Purushottam together in the mandirs in Bochasan, Sarangpur, Gondal, Atladra and Gadhada. These places should be considered as the holiest pilgrim places and devotees should visit them. One's mind should be kept steadfast unto the God-realized Sadhu who is regarded as a moving place of pilgrimage (83).

In the event of harassment from evil spirits, one should chant the *Narayan Kavach* or *Hanuman Mantra*. However, devotees of the manifest form of God should chant mantras and *stotras* related to him, such as, *Janmangal Stotram* and *Sarvamangal Stotram*. But in no case, should my devotees turn to an inferior deity or chant mantras and *stotras* invoking such a deity.

Purity of Company

My devotees should never listen to people whose discourses might lead them astray from their path of duty as well as from devotion to God. In other words, one should never listen to a speaker who has no devotion or sense of duty towards Shriji Maharaj. Those who listen will not attain *moksha*. Never associate with ungrateful people who easily forget the good done to them and betray others in speech and deed. One should not associate with the six types of evil people: thieves, sinners, hypocrites, addicts, the lustful and impostors. By associating with evil one also becomes evil-minded (25, 26, 27).

Under the pretext of knowledge or devotion, one should not associate oneself with a man who has great weakness and excessive love for wealth, women and food. The impostors always act under the cover of hypocritical devotion and so-called wisdom and say, "God is the saviour and purifies the fallen, so even if you chant 'Swaminarayan' once all your sins shall be pardoned, since his protection is very strong." Under the cover of such hypocritical devotion they remain attached to wealth, women and the pleasures of eating. Just as association with women can cause spiritual downfall, similarly, association with men who lust for women causes downfall. This is a universal truth. Just as men are forbidden to associate themselves with women, women also can fall by improper association with men. Shriji Maharaj says, "Those who are lustful towards wealth and women in all states and have excessive love for the tastes of the tongue, can never be happy either in this life or the life hereafter" (Vachanamrut, Gadhada III 38). So, how can a person who seeks such company ever dream of becoming happy? Therefore, a devotee should always stay within the tenets of religion and seek communion with a God-realized Sadhu who is steadfast in his duties. Hence, the devotee should communicate through darshan, worship and obedience. This instantly kindles faith and devotion (28-36).

Ethics of Social Behaviour

One should not accept food or water at the hands of an unworthy person, even if it is *prasad* or *charanamrut*. Food and water offered by a person should be refused if it does not meet the criteria of *varnashram* dharma. In this connection, Shriji Maharaj

says that one who enjoys worldly pleasures, without any discrimination, even if he is as great as Narad, Sanakadik and others, is sure to be degraded. What then can be said about the minds of ordinary egotistic people becoming degraded? (Vachanamrut, Gadhada I 18, Shikshapatri 20).

Devotees should never accept bribes from any one, because ill-gotten wealth degrades the person, and destroys and uproots him completely (26).

None of my devotees should ever argue with women because there are certain innate traits in women which may give rise to difficulties. In the same way, one should never argue with a king and his officials, nor should they insult men of status, scriptural scholars and those who are carrying arms. By insulting and offending these people, one may face complete ruin (34, 35).

No one should commit a breach of trust because great damage is caused to the person who is thus betrayed. He is hurt. However noble and virtuous one may be, one should never indulge in self-praise because only those who are vain, indulge in self-praise. The noble are always humble. They never try to impress or influence people by self-praise. They never overshadow or suppress other people (37).

A person must be assigned work for which he is suitable only after appropriate consideration. A person should not be delegated work for which he is not suitable.

One should always take proper care of one's relations and servants regarding their food and clothes according to one's means.

A person should be addressed in accordance with his community, education, austerities, yoga, power and influence, bearing in mind the prevailing circumstances. Here Shriji Maharaj has given guidance regarding the norms of social behaviour (66, 67, 68).

My devotees should never divulge the secrets of others at any place. By doing so one commits the sin of betrayal and the person whose secret is revealed feels hurt. This results in the sin of betrayal. If you desire to correct some fault in others, it should be done in private without crossing the bounds of courtesy. One should not expose others in public. People should be accorded the respect they deserve. One should honour good and bad people according to their merit. Otherwise, it will lead to a breakdown in the observance of right and wrong. Therefore, the bounds of courtesy should never be ignored by observing a false decorum of equality (75).

2. Kirtan

He Hari Hari Prabhu karunā kari,
Narnāri ugārvāne nartanu dhari...
Akshardhāmi chho bahunāmi, svatantra sarvādhār;
Kalimal bal je prabal thayo, Hari tenā chho harnār... 1
Asur adharmi mahā kukarmi, detā janne dukh;
Multhi tenā kul ukhādi, santne didhā sukh... 2

Vādi harāvyā bandh karāvyā, hinsāmay bahu yāg;
Dāru māti chori averi, teh karāvyā tyāg... 3
Pāj dharmani āj shu bāndhi, lidhi arini lāj;
Dhan triya tyāgi sādhu kidhā, sarvopari Mahārāj... 4
Vishvavihāri aj avikāri, avatāri albel;
Kalpataru chho sukh devāmā chhogālā rangchhel... 5

3. Galuji

As instructed by Maharaj Galuji leaves home with all his belongings

Galuji Rajput, a farmer of the village Dadusar, near Mahemdavad, had returned from his field and was about to take his meal. His mother had lit a lamp and his plate was ready. Then a devotee called Dharamsinh of village Vadthal arrived there with a letter from Shriji Maharaj. This letter read, “As soon as you receive this letter, load all your belongings into a cart and come all alone to Vadthal, leaving your mother at home.”

In accordance with Maharaj’s command, Galuji collected all his belongings, loaded them into a cart and reached Vadthal that very night to meet Shriji Maharaj.

With an intention to settle some old score with Galuji, some Garasiyas surrounded Galuji’s house and entered the house through the roof by removing the roof tiles. They saw a lamp burning in the house and Galuji’s mother on a cot, with a rosary in her hand chanting “Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan.” She was stunned to see the men

descending from the roof. She challenged, “Who is that?” A voice replied, “Where is Galuji?”

The aged mother replied, “He was called by Bhagwan Swaminarayan to Vadthal last night. He went there without even taking his supper. He has gone there with all his belongings.”

The Garasiyas were taken aback. They approached the old woman and said, “Mother! Your God is indeed very great and your son, Galuji, is indeed a true devotee of God. We had decided to plunder your house and kill your son. But God came to his rescue.” The old woman was listening to all this without a flutter in her heart. She had firm faith in Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

She replied, “My dear, in order to protect him, Maharaj called him to Vadthal. If you give up all your enmity, God will protect you, too.”

The Garasiyas felt that what the old lady was telling was right. They said to her, “Mother, you are right. From today Galuji’s God is our God too and now we have no bitterness or enmity towards Galuji. Please arrange for us to receive the blessings of God.” With these words they bowed at the feet of the old woman and left.

Once, when Maharaj was to visit Dadusar, Galuji’s mother died. All the brothers were worried, “What should we do now?”

Galuji replied, “If we remain engaged in performing the last rites, then Maharaj will not stay. So, let us cover the body and put it in the loft while Maharaj is here with us.” They acted accordingly and did not mourn their mother’s death.

Early in the morning, Maharaj arrived there accompanied by a group of sadhus. Galuji had donned plain clothes. He received Maharaj with the beating of drums. He offered prostrations, and led Maharaj and the sadhus to the mansion of a Sheth. He had food prepared by a Brahmin and served Maharaj and the sadhus.

Then Shriji Maharaj said, “Today, we are in a hurry to reach Vartal. Next time when we come, we will do whatever you want us to do.”

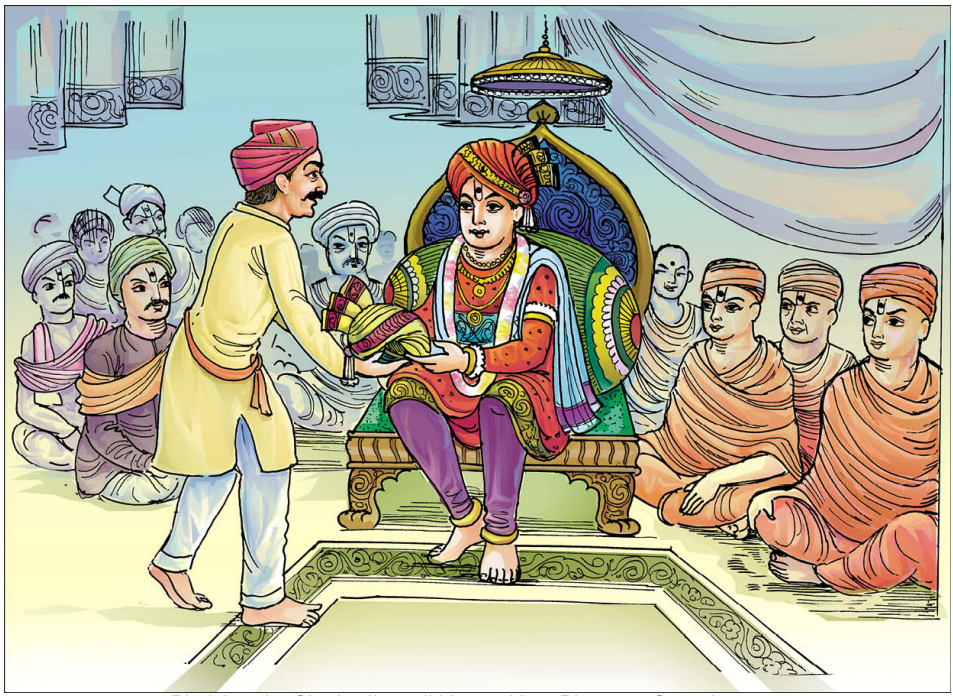
With the beating of the drums Galuji and other devotees accompanied Maharaj and sadhus for one mile to see them off. Then Shriji Maharaj stopped Galuji and said, “Galuji return home and complete your unfinished work.” With these words Maharaj continued walking ahead.

But then Muktanand Swami inquired, “Maharaj, what work had Galuji to finish?”

Shriji Maharaj replied, “Hope, you will not have any doubts, and then explained, “His aged mother has gone to Dham. He had kept the body in the loft in order to serve us. Only Galuji can do this. None else can act like this.”

When the sadhus and devotees heard this they remarked, “Oh! The Darbar is really great. Only a man with such devotion can ignore public criticism. Others would not do this fearing dharma. But God certainly accepts the worship of those who believe that one becomes pure by seeking communion with God.” Thus, they praised Galuji heartily.

4. Bhalchandra Sheth (Bhaichandbhai)



Bhalchandra Sheth offers all his wealth to Bhagwan Swaminarayan

The joy in the hearts of the devotees was overflowing when Shriji Maharaj arrived at Surat. They accorded him a very warm welcome and honoured him in a grand procession with much fanfare through the main streets of the city. It was a memorable sight. The devotees considered it their rare privilege and great fortune to serve Shriji Maharaj in person – an opportunity which is rare even for deities like Brahma and others. The devotees believed that their life on this earth was fulfilled. They offered him precious ornaments, dresses, garlands of flowers and sandalwood strips, served him with the most delicious dishes and worshipped him with sincere devotion and love.

The devotees of Surat won the favour of Shriji Maharaj. Shri Bhaichandbhai, of the Vania community, was the foremost among all the devotees. When the opponents of Shriji Maharaj saw the immense love the devotees had towards him and his profound prowess their plans of creating trouble could not materialize. They had all turned pale and looked crestfallen. Even Shri Ardeshar Kotwal, who had become a *satsangi* by associating with Bhaichandbhai, played a leading role in arranging the grand welcome in honour of Shriji Maharaj.

Although Shri Ardesharbhai was a Kotwal (an official) and a Parsi by faith, he was a great friend of Bhaichandbhai. Once, he asked Bhaichandbhai, “Is there any deity on this earth who would instantly answer our prayers and immediately rush to our

succour?"

Bhaichandbhai replied, "At present my Bhagwan Swaminarayan is the manifest form of God on the earth who can do this. Whenever you are in trouble, remember 'Swaminarayan' and he will certainly come to your aid."

During that period it so happened that Ardesharbhai fell victim to certain jealous rivals and lost his post as an officer. He became very disappointed. One night, while he was lying in bed worrying about his problems, he suddenly recalled Bhaichandbhai's advice.

"Oh! Bhaichandbhai's God, Bhagwan Swaminarayan, please come to my succour and save me. My prestige is at stake." He repeated his prayer again and again and fell asleep. Shriji Maharaj appeared to him in a dream. He put a vermilion mark on his forehead and said, "Tomorrow morning the king will re-appoint you as a *suba.*"

In the morning, when Ardeshar woke up, he was surprised to find a *tilak* on his forehead. As promised by Shriji Maharaj in the dream, that very morning the king invited Ardesharbhai and reappointed him as a *suba* with full honour. He talked about his dream and its outcome to Bhaichandbhai and expressed his earnest desire to seek communion with Shriji Maharaj and to accord him a grand welcome when he visited Surat.

When Shriji Maharaj came to Surat, Shri Ardeshar Kotwal, accompanied the devotees up to Ashwinikumar Ghat to receive him. Shriji Maharaj bestowed upon him his divine bliss and gave him his turban. Shri Ardesharbhai's successors have still preserved the turban and treasured it as a rare divine memento.

Looking to Bhaichandbhai's deep devotion, detachment and firm faith in Bhagwan Swaminarayan, many people were attracted towards him and had become *satsangis* under his influence.

While Shriji Maharaj was in Surat, he addressed the assembly, "Those who are seeking *moksha* should offer worship, honouring the tenets of religion."

At that time Bhaichandbhai was present there. He asked Shriji Maharaj, "O Maharaj! Teach us that mode of worship which saves us from the cycles of birth and death and makes us eternally worthy of your service. What is the form of such devotion? What are the qualities of a devotee who offers such firm and steadfast devotion? How much affection does such a devotee have for God? How much love does God have towards such a dedicated devotee?" Thus, he asked these four questions on bhakti.

Bhaichandbhai was worthy of such devotion, so Shriji Maharaj was very happy with his questions. Even great scholars, if they are not worthy of God's bliss, cannot comprehend and understand the answers to these questions. Then Shriji Maharaj, with a desire to explain this most difficult path of bhakti to the congregation, answered in detail all the four questions raised by Bhaichandbhai and immersed the devotees in such devotion. Shriji Maharaj was impressed by Bhaichandbhai's intense devotion towards him and bestowed upon him his choicest blessings.

Bhaichandbhai had joined himself unto Shriji Maharaj with such devotion, so whenever there were religious celebrations, he did not miss an opportunity to please

Maharaj by going there with his fellow devotees.

5. Murti Puja

Murti means form, figure or shape. When a figure is consecrated it becomes a *murti* worthy of worship. The worship of such a sanctified *murti* is called *murti puja* – image or icon worship. In Indian culture and the Vedic tradition and culture, *murti puja* has a unique place. It is accepted in our culture as one of the sources of enlightenment in life. The lifeless *murtis* of stone or wood cannot by themselves do any good to you. But when either God himself or a God-realized Satpurush performs the prescribed Vedic rites of invoking the divinity of God in the *murti,* then God himself remains manifest in the *murti.* It then ceases to be merely stone or wood and becomes a gateway to *moksha* for spiritual aspirants.

In the way a piece of paper becomes a currency note when stamped with the government seal, a *murti* also attains divinity when consecrated by the Satpurush. That is why devotees do not consider *murtis* merely as piece of wood, stone or paper. Instead they feel the presence of God in the *murti* and worship it with love and devotion. One who sees God in his innerself sees him in *murtis* too. Therefore, the devout with firm faith in the scriptures and the sermons of the Satpurush, remains steadfast and worships *murtis* with deep devotion.

God remains manifest in the *murti.* A Bhil boy, named Eklavya, prepared a *murti* of his guru Dronacharya and saw in it the presence of the real teacher and practised archery before it. He attained such a mastery that he became more skillful than even Arjun, the great archer. Bhakta Dhruva was also guided by Narad to worship the *murti* of God and in six months, he attained the darshan of God.

Damodarji (Krishna) used to appear before Narsinh Mehta, the great Gujarati devotee-poet. The *murti* of Harikrishna Maharaj used to talk in person with Shri Rampratapbhai at Vartal. The *murti* of Gopinathji used to give a garland daily to Premanand Swami. Maharaj had appeared in person to Brahmanand Swami through the *murti* of Gopinathji.

Necessity of Murti Puja

It is very difficult to make one's mind free of desire sense pleasures. After much thought and long experience, Maharshi Patanjali observed, *'Yathābhimat-adhyānādvā'*, meaning, one experiences peace by meditating upon the object of one's love. For the purpose of concentration, we need some tangible physical symbol. Even the Gita says, *'Avyaktā hi gatirdukham'*, i.e., it is very difficult to concentrate on an abstract object. Therefore, some symbol is necessary. Everyone shares Patanjali's experience and feel that only the beloved can be the object of love. God and his holy Sadhu are loved by all because they are pure. When a devotee pours all his feelings and emotions in the *murti* of God through the nine modes of worship, then only does his mind become steadfast

and he experience divine bliss.

It is said in the Pancharatra scriptures that those who see stone, wood, metal or a picture in the *murti* of God and see an ordinary man in their guru and discriminate against the devotees of God according to their castes are sinners and atheists.

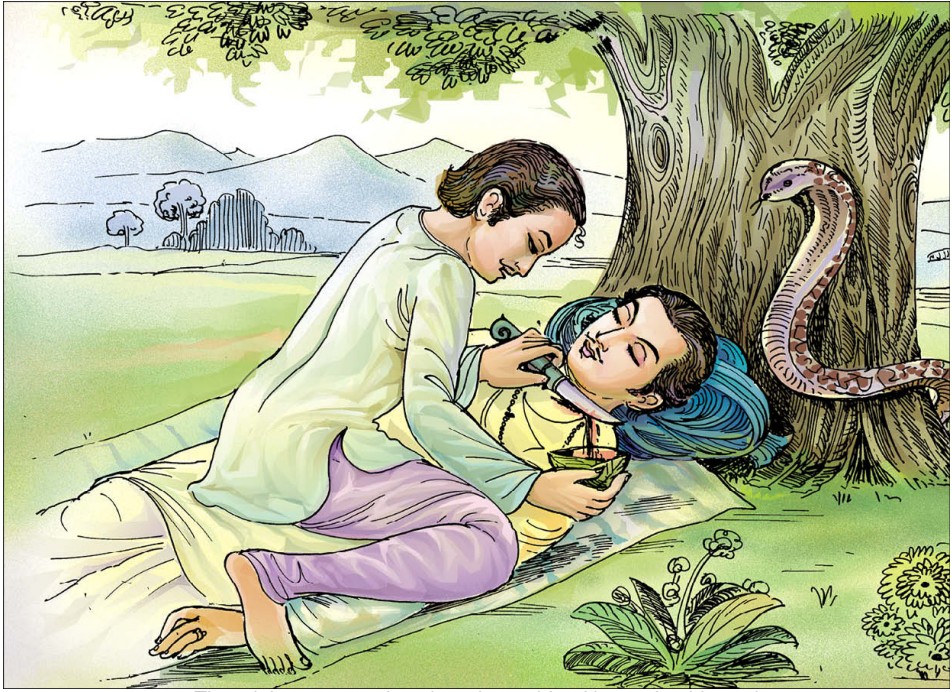
Shriji Maharaj has said, “One who doubts the *murti* of God will begin to lose faith in the sadhu and God.”

God is omnipresent. He is in both the animate and inanimate. He remains manifest in a consecrated *murti*. Therefore, *murti puja* is a means to realizing God by attaining control over the mind and senses.

6. Glory of the Name of Shri Swaminarayan

Je Swāmināràyan nām leshe, tenā badhā pātak bāli deshe;
Chhe nām mārā shrutimā anek, sarvopari ā ja ganāy ek. 1
Jo Swāmināràyan ek vār, rate bijā nām ratyā hajār;
Japyā thaki je fal thāy tenu, kari shake varnan kon enu. 2
Shadākshari mantra mahāsamarth, jethi thashe siddha samast arth;
Sukhi kare sankat sarva kāpe, ante vali Akshardhām āpe. 3
Gāyatrithi laksh gano vishesh, jāne ja jeno mahimā Mahesh;
Jyā jyā mahā muktajano vasāy, ā kālmā to jap e ja thāy. 4
Jo antkāle shravane sunāy, pāpi ghano te pan moksha jāy;
Te mantrathi bhut pishāch bhāge, te mantrathi to sadbuddhi jāge. 5
Te mantra jenā mukhthi japāy, tenā thaki to jam nāsi jāy;
Shri Swāmināràyan je kaheshe, bhāve kubhāve pan mukti leshe. 6
Shadaksharo chhe shat shāstrasār, te to utāre bhavsindhu pār;
Chhaye rutumā divase nishāye, sarve kriyāmā samaro sadāye. 7
Pavitra dehe apavitra dehe, ā nām nitye smaravu sanehe;
Jale karine tanmel jāy, ā nāmthi antar shuddh thāy. 8
Jene mahāpāp karyā anant,jene pidyā Brāhman dhenu sant;
Te Swāmināràyan nām letā, lāji mare chhe mukhthi kahetā. 9
Shri Swāmināràyan nām sār, chhe pāpne te prajalāvnār;
Pāpi ghanu antar hoy jenu, balyā vinā kem rahe ja tenu.10

7. Spirit of Friendship



The minister's son takes the prince's blood by cutting his neck

There was a prince who had developed a great friendship with the son of the minister. Once, both of them went hunting together. They lost their way and as they had to walk through the forest for a long time they became tired. The tired prince stretched himself under a tree and soon fell asleep. The son of the minister did not sleep and kept guard on the prince. But soon there came a fierce snake; it made a great hissing sound. It was on the point of biting the prince, but as the minister's son saw the snake, he drew his sword to kill it.

To his surprise, the snake began to speak, "This prince is my enemy since his last birth. Only when I drink blood from his throat will I feel peace. Therefore, do not kill me."

The minister's son replied, "I will give you the blood from his throat but you should not bite him." The snake became quiet and started looking at the minister's son.

The minister's son soon made a bowl out of leaves, sat on the prince's chest and made a cut on his throat with his dagger. As soon as he made the cut the prince woke up and was puzzled to see his friend sitting on his chest with a dagger in his hand. But the prince closed his eyes and the minister's son filled the bowl of leaves with the blood of the prince and offered it to the snake. The snake sipped the blood and went away quickly. Then the minister's son applied some herbal medicine on the cut and tied a bandage on it.

After some time, the prince awoke. He did not utter a word and behaved as if nothing had happened and both of them resumed their journey. They spent several days in the forest, but the prince never asked the minister's son anything. However, the

minister's son became impatient. So, he asked the prince, "When you were asleep I had sat on your chest, and made a cut on your throat. Look, here is the bandage on your throat. I wonder why you haven't asked me anything about it?"

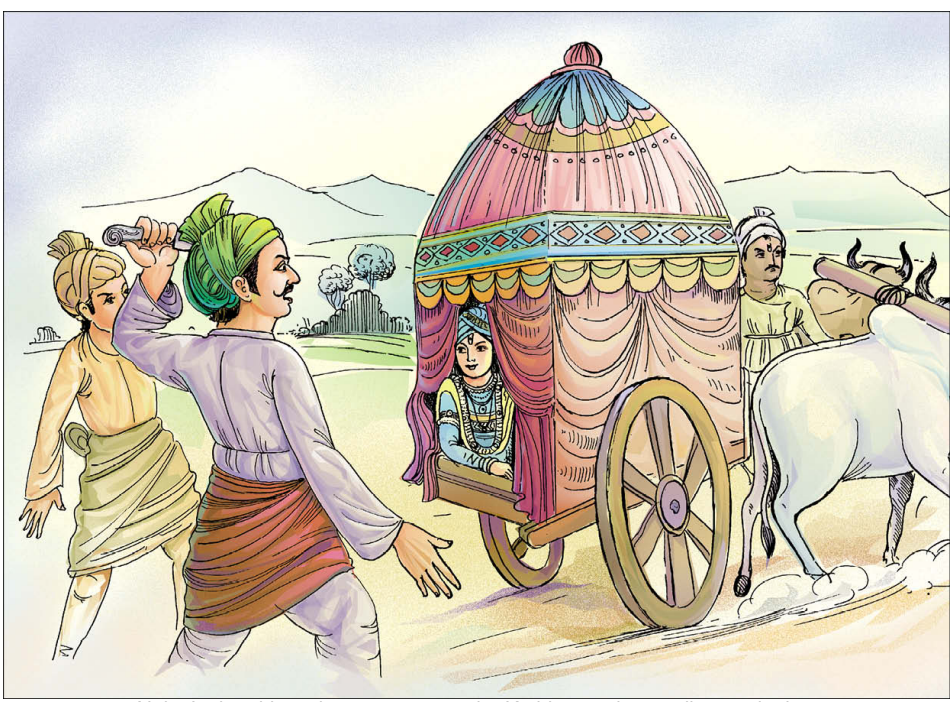
The prince replied, "You are my great friend. You must have done something which was in my interest. Therefore, I have not asked you any questions."

If there had been someone else in his place, he would have definitely doubted that he was trying to kill him for the valuable ornaments or gold coins. But the prince had great faith in his friend, and he knew what the true spirit of friendship was. He was convinced that his friend would do no wrong to him.

Shriji Maharaj has said that if a friend tells you something in your interest, even by hurting your feelings, you should not feel bad. This is the real spirit of friendship.

Everyone must cultivate this spirit of friendship towards God, his Sadhu and devotees.

8. Naja Jogiya



Naja Jogiya drives the cart away as the Kathis remain standing motionless

Shriji Maharaj had protected his devotee Naja Jogiya against the atrocities of the landlord of Bhoyra, Vasur Khachar. Pleased by the deep devotion of Naja, Shriji Maharaj invited him to Gadhada and asked him to stay with him.

Once, Pragji Purani was reciting the Gita. He talked about the Vishwarup Darshan which Shri Krishna had shown to Arjun. Naja was puzzled. He thought, "What could

this Vishwarup form be like?"

Shriji Maharaj showered his grace on Naja and sent him into samadhi. He showed him all the fourteen realms in his divine self, lifted him by hand and finally showed him the Vishwarup form. But Naja Jogiya became impatient, so Maharaj brought him back from the samadhi.

Once, Naja Jogiya was driving a cart. Shriji Maharaj was sleeping inside. As the cart was passing through the forest two Kathis in the service of Jiva Khachar stopped the cart and asked Naja Jogiya, "Who is sleeping in your cart?"

Naja Jogiya thought that they were dacoits. Fearfully, he said, "He is my guest and I am driving him to his destination."

The Kathis asked, "He is not Swaminarayan, is he?"

As soon as Shriji Maharaj heard this, he removed the cloth from his face and said, "Yes, I am Swaminarayan. What do you want?"

The Kathis were very pleased to see their prey. They started talking, "Here is Dada Khachar's guru, let us stab him." With these words, they stood, one on either side of the cart, drew their daggers and raised them to attack Maharaj. But Shriji Maharaj challenged them aloud and both the Kathis stood there like statues, with daggers raised in their hands.

Then Maharaj turned to Naja Jogiya and said, "Drive your cart." Naja Jogiya started driving the cart and would frequently turn to see whether the Kathis were following them or not. But to his surprise both of them were still standing there, with daggers raised in their hands. Thus, Maharaj showed his prowess to Naja Jogiya.

Once, Maharaj was living incognito in the house of Alaiya Khachar at Jhinjhavadar. Naja Jogiya was also staying there. One day Maharaj started wrestling with Naja Jogiya. Four times Maharaj flung Naja Jogiya up to the ceiling and threw him on the ground. But Naja Jogiya was not hurt at all.

Naja Jogiya said to Maharaj, "O Maharaj! I have been lifted four times up to the ceiling and thrown hard to the ground, but I have not been hurt at all. Why is that?"

Maharaj replied, "If you get hurt and your bones break, then who will wrestle with me again? Therefore, I have protected you and made sure that you did not get hurt."

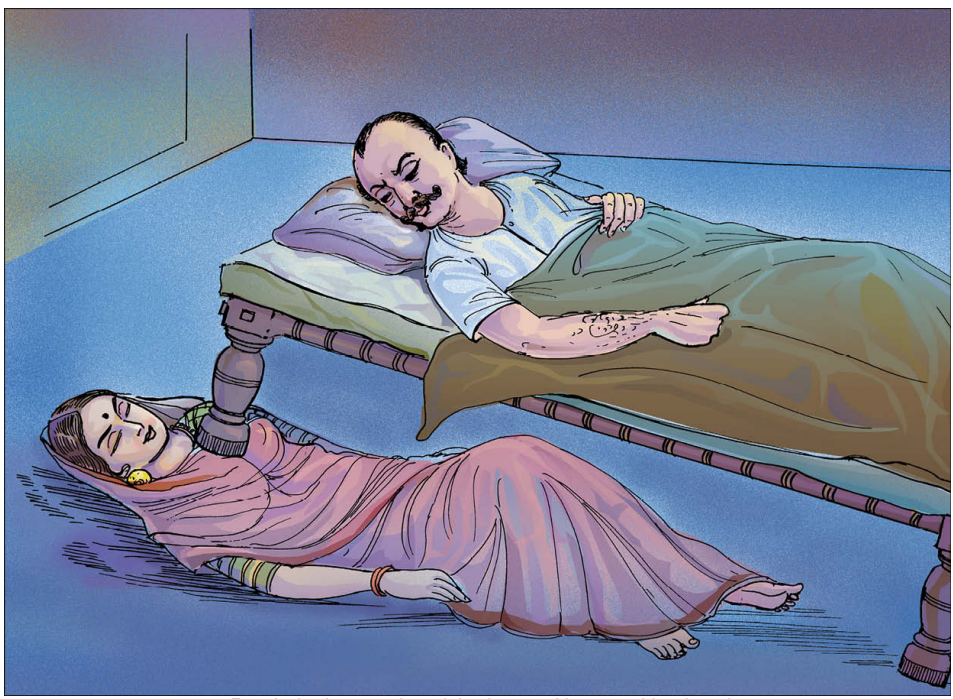
After Shriji Maharaj's return to Dham, Naja Jogiya was initiated into the sadhu-fold by Acharya Raghuvirji Maharaj and was named Ghanshyamdas. He was then living at Vartal. However, he attended festivals at Junagadh. He was very impressed by the penetrating talks of Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami, so he began to live in Junagadh.

Once, Ghanshyamdas was meditating in the assembly hall. Gunatitanand Swami was sitting by his side. He said to Ghanshyamdas, "Are you meditating or caressing the buffalo with a white spot on the forehead at Gadhada?"

Ghanshyamdas could not say anything because he had reached Gadhada in his meditation and was actually caressing the buffalo with a white spot on the forehead. He fell at the feet of Swami and said, "Swami, I thought you were an insignificant small king. But today I am convinced that you are a sovereign emperor and you are the manifest form of Maharaj. You are truly Akshar."

After this Ghanshyamdas used to preach to his beloved disciples, “This Swami is the incarnation of Mul Akshar, so, recognize him. I had stayed with Maharaj, so I thought that I was fulfilled and had nothing else to do. I used to think that I had attained spiritual perfection, but now I have realized that I was lacking in something. I had frequently heard from Shriji Maharaj himself that Swami is the incarnation of Aksharbrahman, he is the dwelling place of God. But the real glory of Akshar I realized only after arriving at Junagadh.”

9. Mota Rambai



Rambai tolerates the wickedness of her cruel husband

Mota Rambai was the daughter of Jiva Joshi of Jetpur. Originally, she was known as Kadvibai. She was married to a person of the same village, but due to the *samskars* of her previous births, she was in continuous communion with Shriji Maharaj and worshipped him constantly. None of her in-laws liked this. Her husband was an evil-minded person, so he used to torture her for worshipping God. At night, when he retired to sleep he would place the leg of his bed on her chest and torture her. But Kadvibai was staunch in her worship to God, so she never tired of offering devotion. And she was not deterred by the harassment from her husband.

Once, she was singing:

“Tedi jāo to amārā man thare...” – “Take me away with you my Lord, that only can bring peace to my mind.”

At that time she heard a voice from the heavens, “One who wants to worship cannot remain tied down to a husband. She should remove her bangles and hair.”

Kadvibai was surprised to hear this. Then, accompanied by her brother Shivram, she went to see one of her relatives at Pithvadi. She once again started singing,

“Tedi jāo to amārā man thare...”

Once again Maharaj repeated the same advice from the heavens. Shivram said to Kadvibai, “Sister, these are the words of Maharaj.”

Then Kadvibai said to Shivram, “Let us go to Gadhada.”

Both, brother and sister went to Gadhada and had the darshan of Maharaj. Kadvibai’s mind was drawn towards Maharaj and she was convinced about the supreme divine form of Maharaj. Then she returned to Jetpur. Kadvibai’s devotion became more intense. So, even while doing household work, she continuously sang the praises of God.

One day, her husband became very angry with her and said to her, “From, today I will treat you as a mother and sister.”

Kadvibai was waiting for such an opportunity. She turned to him and replied, “You, too, from this moment, shall be like my father and brother.” With these words, she broke her bangles, had her hair shaved from her head and took the ritual bath that one takes after the death of one’s husband. When the Brahmins of her community heard about this they became very angry and decided to kill Kadvibai. However, Darbar Unnad Khachar, who was a devotee, rushed with a sword in his hand to save Kadvibai. When the Brahmins saw him, they were scared and ran away.

That very night, Shriji Maharaj gave darshan to Kadvibai and said, “Don’t worry, tomorrow there will be heavy rain in the higher regions and there will be a flood in the River Bhadar. When the river floods, go to the bank, remember me and plunge into the water. At that time you will see my figure in the water. Follow my figure and swim across the river.” After saying this much Maharaj disappeared.

The next afternoon, Kadvibai said to her mother-in-law, “I am going to the river to fetch water.” With these words she took two pots and without waiting for her mother-in-law’s reply went to the river. Due to the heavy rains in the hilly regions, the river was overflowing. She remembered Maharaj and soon his divine figure appeared there. Kadvibai jumped into the water. Many people, who were standing on the bank, saw her being drowned. But she embraced the figure of Maharaj which safely took her across the river. On the opposite bank, two *parshads* of Maharaj were waiting for her with a cart. She sat in the cart and arrived at Gadhada.

Maharaj was very pleased to see Kadvibai. He gave her a new name, Rambai. Rambai stayed with Jivuba at Gadhada and strengthened the *satsang* of many women.

Sadguru Premanand Swami composed a *kirtan* to commemorate this episode. He sang,

“Mero kangan nikāri gayo re...” – “My bangles have been removed.” When Maharaj heard this he scolded Premanand Swami and asked him, “When have I done such a thing?”

At that time Motiba pointed towards Rambai. Maharaj started smiling when he saw

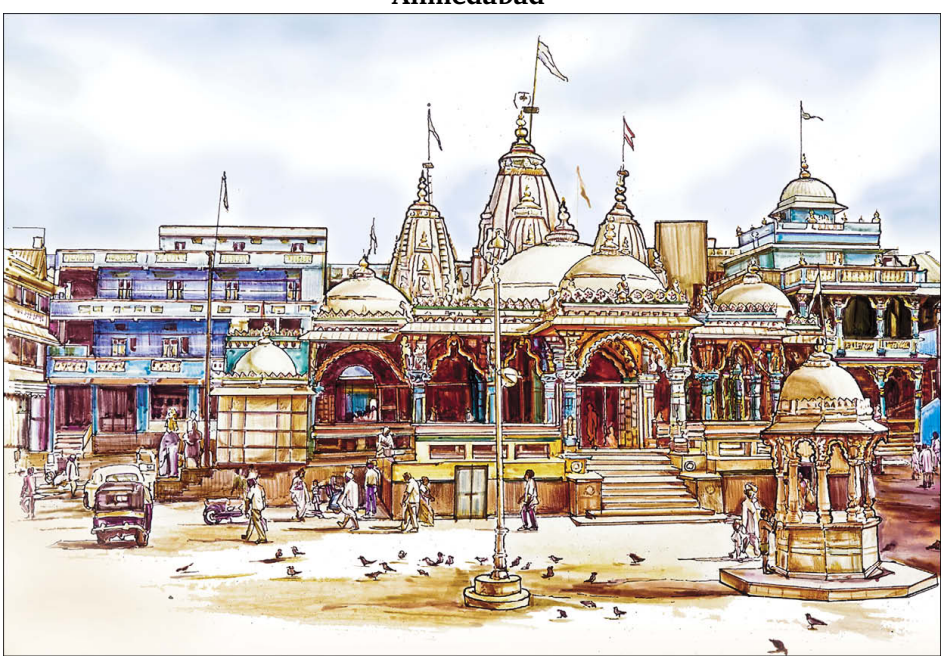
her.

Throughout her life Rambai stayed with Motiba in Gadhada and worshipped God.

10. Mandirs

Shriji Maharaj has stated in Vachanamrut, Gadhada II 27, "For the sake of preserving *upasana*, I have relaxed the emphasis on renunciation and have built mandirs of God. Thereby, even if only a little renunciation remains, *upasana* will at least be preserved, and through it, many *jivas* will attain liberation." One of the six aims behind Shriji Maharaj's manifestation on the earth was to establish the worship of his supreme form along with that of his ideal devotee, Aksharbrahman, and preach the spiritual path of supreme wisdom. To realize this aim and for the spread of the Sampraday, Maharaj built mandirs in Ahmedabad, Bhuj, Vartal, Dholera, Junagadh, Gadhada and consecrated the *murtis* of Lakshmi-Narayan and other deities. He thus, established the path of devotion for his devotees.

Ahmedabad



The first mandir Shriji Maharaj built was in Ahmedabad. After the fall of the Peshwa dynasty, the British ruled over Ahmedabad. Many jealous opponents of the Swaminarayan Sampraday wanted to see to it that it did not flourish in Ahmedabad. But Shriji Maharaj along with his sadhus and *parshads* met the Collector of Ahmedabad, Sir Andrew Dunlop, and also another senior official, General Gordon.

Once, many years before, Sir Andrew Dunlop had gone on a hunting expedition in the forest. While shooting a lion, his bullet passed through the ear of the animal. The

lion was enraged and pounced upon Mr Dunlop. But Shriji Maharaj appeared there in his divine form and lifted him in the air and saved him. Mr Dunlop recalled this old incident when Shriji Maharaj met him. When he saw Maharaj in person, he was convinced that it was he who had protected him from the lion. The Collector was attracted towards Shriji Maharaj and promised to allot him the land of his choice to build a mandir. Shriji Maharaj was pleased with his cooperative nature.

Shriji Maharaj appointed Sadguru Brahmanand Swami and Sadguru Anandanand Swami to look after the construction work. Brahmanand Swami, with his sharp business acumen, got the land together with the necessary documents. Anandanand Swami looked after the day to day work. Under the supervision of Brahmanand Swami, an intelligent and practical man, the construction of the mandir was completed within a very short period.

In this three-pinnacled mandir, in the northern wing, Shriji Maharaj consecrated *murtis* of the emperor of India, Shri Nar-Narayan Dev, on 24 February 1822 (Fagan *sud* 3, Samvat 1878). The *murtis* were consecrated according to the tenets of the Vedic scriptures. Shriji Maharaj has stayed at Ahmedabad mandir many times. He graced the devotees with blessings and discourses. Here, in this mandir, many holy relics belonging to Maharaj have been preserved as mementos.

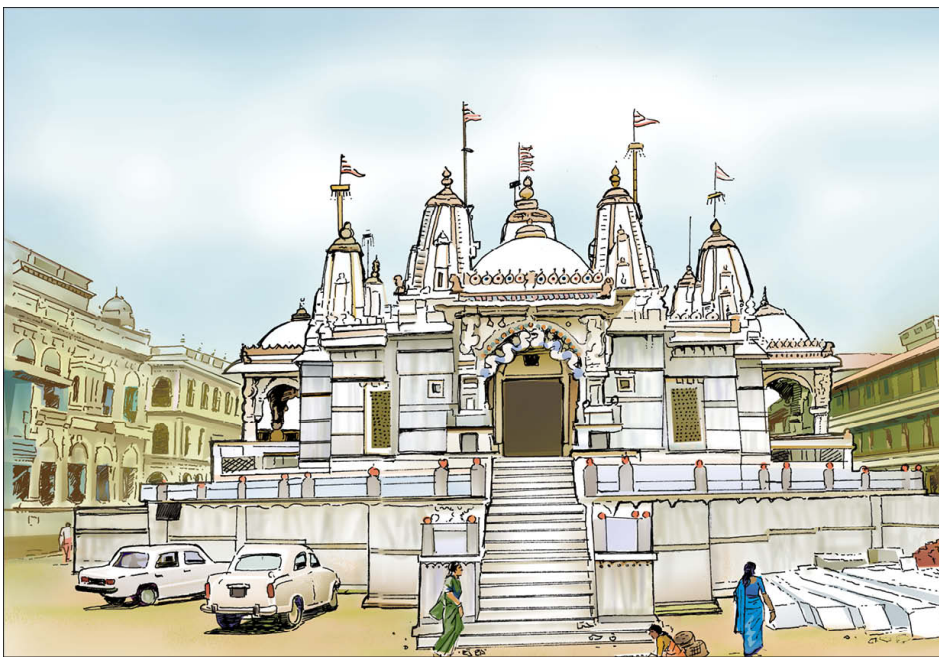
Bhuj

Shriji Maharaj visited Kutch many times and bestowed his divine blessings upon the devotees and through his divine exploits he gave them much happiness. Sundarjibhai, Hirjibhai and Gangaram Malla were among the foremost disciples of Ramanand Swami. After coming into contact with Shriji Maharaj, they were convinced of his divine form and became his devotees. It was because of their deep devotion and love towards him

that Shriji Maharaj had decided to build a mandir in Bhuj. He assigned the work to Vaishnavanand Swami.

Thus, a three-pinnacled mandir was built. In the central sanctuary, on 15 May 1823 (Vaishakh *sud* 5, Samvat 1879), Shriji Maharaj consecrated the *murtis* of Nar-Narayan Dev according to the tenets of the Vedas. There are many places in Kutch where the sacred relics of Shriji Maharaj have been preserved.

Vartal



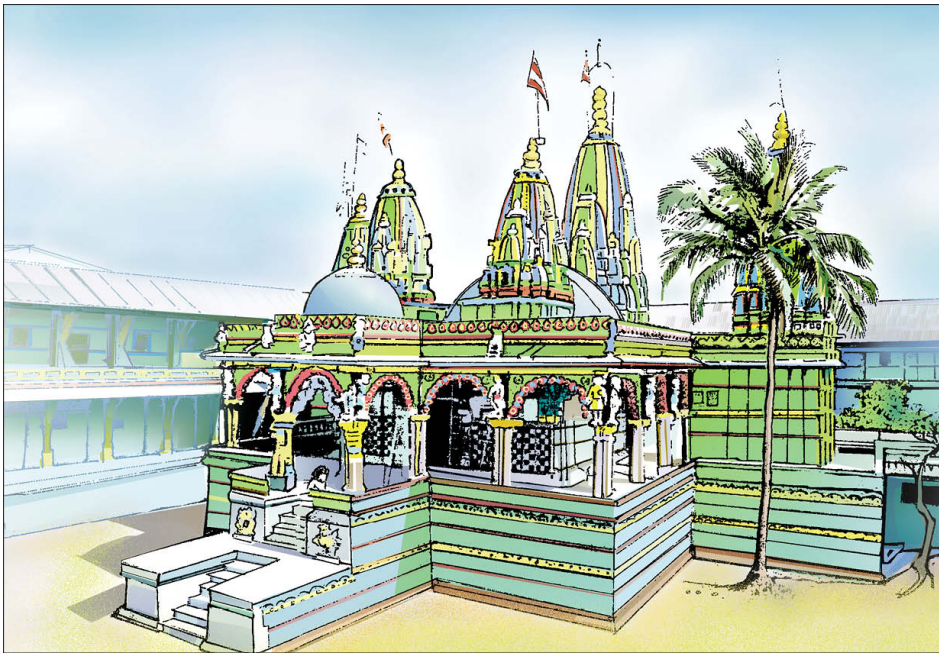
Soon after the completion of the Ahmedabad mandir, Shriji Maharaj asked Sadguru Brahmanand Swami, "You go to Vartal and start building a mandir there. Please see to it that the mandir is small." Brahmanand Swami went to Vartal and consulted Joban Vartalo (Joban Pagi), Vasan Suthar, Narayan Giri Bawo, Kuberbhai, Ranchhodbhai and other local devotees to select suitable land for the mandir. Joban Pagi, undertook the responsibility of providing the bricks. Brahmanand Swami used to beg for alms in the village to feed the workers. Anadi Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami, undertook the responsibility of talking to the labourers about the supreme form of Shriji Maharaj.

Although Shriji Maharaj had asked Brahmanand Swami to build a single-pinnacled mandir, he started building a three-pinnacled mandir. The foundations were laid accordingly. Shriji Maharaj had advised Brahmanand Swami to spend as per the means available, but Brahmanand Swami knew what was in the heart of Maharaj. So he sent a message to him, "With your blessings, there will be heaps of wealth." Shriji Maharaj became very happy and sent his consent and blessings.

Brahmanand Swami constructed a big three-pinnacled mandir based on a lotus design. The mandir's main entrance faces east and it is an exceedingly beautiful structure. On 6 November 1824 (Kartik *sud* 15, Samvat 1881), Shriji Maharaj

consecrated the *murtis* of Lakshmi-Narayan Dev in the central shrine with full Vedic rituals. After this he consecrated the *murtis* of Radha-Krishna on one side and his own *murti* under the name of Harikrishna Maharaj on the other side.

Dholera



This town is situated near the ocean at a distance of 18 miles from Dhandhuka. Shriji Maharaj had appointed Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami, the ideal of renunciation, to manage the construction of the mandir in Dholera. Darbar Punjajibhai had donated his land for the mandir. It is a huge five-pinnacled mandir with its central doors facing north. On 19 May 1826 (Vaishakh *sud* 13, Samvat 1882), Maharaj consecrated *murtis* of Madan-Mohan Dev in the central shrine. Nishkulanand Swami stayed here and spread Satsang and wrote many religious books.

Junagadh

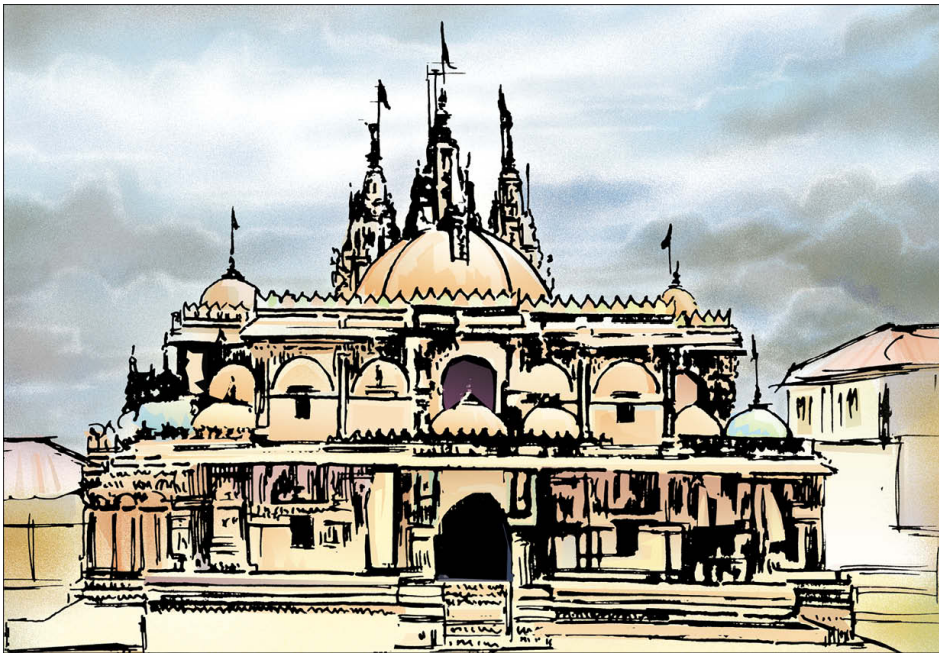
Shriji Maharaj had promised his beloved devotee, Shri Jhinabhai of Panchala, that he would build a big mandir at Junagadh. When Shriji Maharaj visited Junagadh, Nawab Hamid Khan was greatly attracted towards the magnetic personality of Shriji Maharaj and extended all necessary help in the construction of the mandir. Jhinabhai's son, Dadabhai, gave the land for the purpose of building a mandir. Junagadh was under Muslim rule and most of the administrators were Nagar Brahmins. The Nagars had intense dislike for the Swaminarayan Sampraday. Therefore, Maharaj sent Brahmanand Swami to Junagadh because he knew that he could tackle the Nagars. He also sent Gunatitanand Swami to win over the Nagars through his personality and his ability of conducting intelligent discourses.

As requested by Gopalanand Swami, the foundation stone of this mandir was laid by Gunatitanand Swami on 10 May 1826 (Vaishakh *sud* 3, Samvat 1882). During the construction work the Nagars created a lot of problems. The Nagars instigated the chief administrator of the State, Rangildas, to demolish the structure of the mandir which was in progress. All the devotees were concerned. They went to Gopalanand Swami and informed him about Rangildas' intention. Swami said, "Here is the end of Rangildas." With these words he pulled a hair from his armpit and threw it on the ground. At that very moment, Rangildas, who was returning from another town, fell down from his horse and was killed by his own dagger which pierced his stomach. Then Gopalanand Swami, accompanied by Brahmanand Swami, went to the Nawab and put him in a state of samadhi. During the samadhi, the Nawab saw Prophets *(Paigambers)* offering prayers to Maharaj. The Nawab was deeply attracted towards Maharaj and soon all the hurdles which were obstructing the construction work were removed.

With much fanfare and to the accompaniment of the melodious tunes of *shahnais* on

1 May 1828 (Vaishakh *vad* 2, Samvat 1884), Shriji Maharaj consecrated the *murtis* of Radha-Raman Dev. Shriji Maharaj had promised the Nawab, "I will appoint someone like me in charge of Junagadh mandir." Accordingly he appointed Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami, his manifest form, as the *mahant* of Junagadh.

Gadhada



This was the last mandir built by Shriji Maharaj. For nearly 28 years Shriji Maharaj had stayed in the *darbar* of Dada Khachar, and had bestowed upon him and his family his choicest blessings and divine bliss. Maharaj was very eager to build a mandir on the hill near the banks of the river Ghela, but Jiva Khachar did not co-operate with him. Maharaj was greatly disappointed and went away to Sarangpur. When Laduba, Jivuba and Dada Khachar heard about Maharaj's departure from Gadhada they followed him to Sarangpur, convinced Maharaj to return to Gadhada and Dada Khachar willingly donated his own *darbar* to build a mandir.

Maharaj had taken a keen interest in the construction of this mandir. Maharaj had commanded the sadhus and devotees to bring one stone each when returning from the river after taking their morning bath. Maharaj also used to bring a stone, carrying it on his precious turban. Within no time a beautiful two-storey mandir with three spires was built. On 9 October 1829 (Aso *sud* 12, Samvat 1885), the *murti-pratishtha* ceremony of the *murti* of Gopinath Maharaj was performed by Shriji Maharaj. Also in Gadhada, Lakshmi Vadi, the river Ghela, *darbar* of Dada Khachar, Radhavav, etc. are places sanctified by Shriji Maharaj.

Shriji Maharaj's divine exploits and sermons can easily convince anyone about his divinity, supremacy and the fact that he is the source of all the avatars. But when he incarnated in human form it was difficult for people to accept this glory of Shriji

Maharaj, so he built mandirs and consecrated the *murtis* of other incarnations. In Vartal, he wanted to install his own *murti,* but there was much objection so he consecrated it under the name of 'Harikrishna Maharaj'. Under such circumstances, how can he even think of installing the *murtis* of his own supreme form – Purushottam – and also of his choicest devotee, Aksharbrahman?

Gunatitanand Swami is the manifestation of eternal Aksharbrahman, the heavenly abode of Maharaj. Bhagwan Swaminarayan is the supreme God. This is the true spiritual mode of worship in accordance with the tenets of the Vedas. Only by consecrating and worshipping the *murtis* of Akshar and Purushottam, can one think of reforming the mode of worship in the Sampraday. With a view to propagating this true mode of worship, Shastriji Maharaj (Yagnapurushdasji) built beautiful mandirs and consecrated the metallic *murtis* of the supreme divine duo of Akshar-Purushottam, Brahman-Parabrahman.

Bochasan

In V.S. 1865 (1809 CE), Shriji Maharaj had promised Kashidas of Bochasan, "Here, at this place, a big mandir will be erected and I shall dwell here along with my Dham." Just under 100 years later Shastriji Maharaj erected a beautiful and grand mandir in Bochasan despite grave opposition and many hardships. But when Maharaj himself had willed to have a mandir at this place, who could stop his work? Hirabhai Mukhi was an outlaw like Joban Pagi, but was completely transformed by Shastriji Maharaj. It was a miracle to see Hirabhai with a rosary in his hand. He had undergone a spiritual transformation.

When the opponents saw that Hirabhai had extended his co-operation to Shastriji Maharaj, their plans for creating trouble in the holy work died out. On 5 June 1907 (Vaishakh *sud* 10, V.S. 1963), with great fanfare the *murti-pratishtha* ceremony of the *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj was performed. As per the wishes of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the victory call of Akshar Purushottam was hailed all around.

Sarangpur

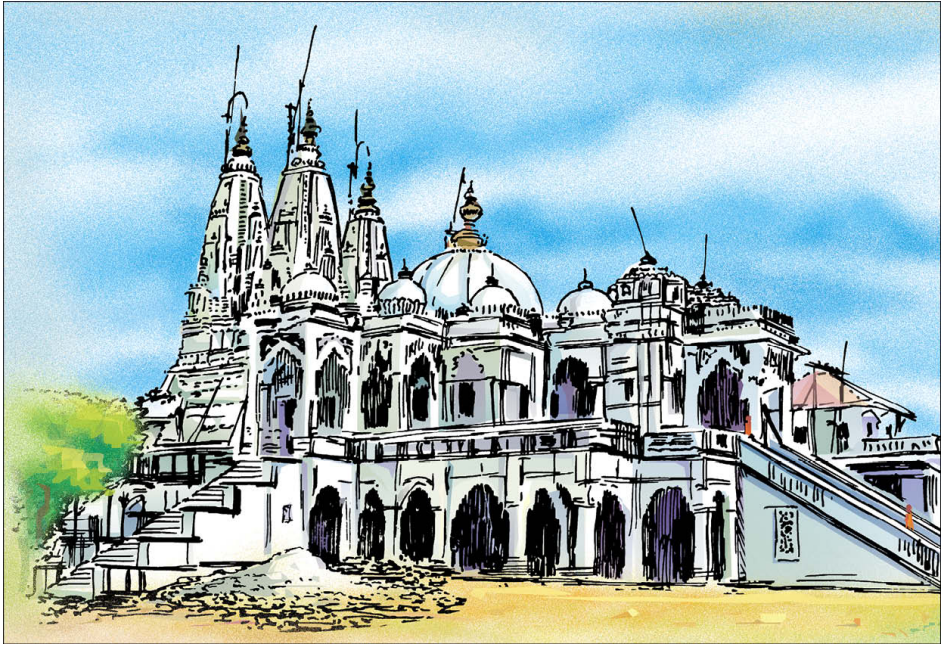
At Sarangpur, on the site where the mandir is situated now, Shriji Maharaj had rode his horse and said, “I am performing the groundbreaking ceremony of a huge mandir.” Maharaj had promised Jiva Khachar that he would construct a mandir at this place and dwell with his ideal Devotee. At this place Shastriji Maharaj acquired 24 acres of land from the Diwan of Limbdi, and with the help of local devotees like Bhima Sheth, Nagji Sheth, Rukhad Khachar, etc. constructed a lofty mandir. Those people who questioned, “How will he complete the construction of the mandir without money?” were stunned to see the incessant flow of wealth coming in. The construction work was completed. Some evil-minded people instigated the Thakor of Limbdi and persuaded him to ask Shastriji Maharaj to install the *murtis* of Radha-Krishna in the central shrine. But Shastriji Maharaj said firmly, “Thakor Saheb, we have renounced and suffered for the sake of Akshar Purushottam!” Everyone was convinced and the opposition died down of its own. On 8 May 1916 (Vaishakh *sud* 6, V.S. 1972), the *murtis* of Bhagwan

Swaminarayan, Gunatitanand Swami and Gopalanand Swami were consecrated in the central shrine in the presence of thousands of devotees who had come from various parts of Gujarat and Kathiawad.

Gondal

Eminent *sadgurus* from Junagadh wished that a glorious mandir be built on the site of Akshar Deri – the memorial shrine over Gunatitanand Swami's cremation spot in Gondal. And by the grace of Shriji Maharaj, Shri Haribhai Amin, the son of Shri Javerbhai Amin, the Diwan of Virsad, donated the land for the mandir. In a short period of just 27 months, Shastriji Maharaj constructed a grand mandir – Akshar Mandir. The devotees from Gujarat assisted by donating money, serving themselves, and convincing others about the spiritual prowess of Shastriji Maharaj. On 24 May 1934 (Vaishakh *sud* 10, V.S. 1990), the metallic *murtis* of Akshar Purushottam were consecrated according to the tenets of the Vedas. Shastriji Maharaj appointed Yogiji Maharaj, who was dearest to his heart as the first *mahant* of Akshar Mandir.

Atladra



Shastriji Maharaj wished to build a mandir here on the land owned by Mulu Metar and Krishna Mali and which had been sanctified by Shriji Maharaj. The leader of Atladra village, Shri Mathurbhai Makandas Patel, was a worldly man and was absorbed in the pleasures of life. Shastriji Maharaj transformed his heart. He invited Shastriji Maharaj to Atladra and requested him to build a mandir there promising to extend all possible help. The devotees from Kanam and Vakal regions were greatly impressed and pleased by the construction work of the mandir. They extended their help wholeheartedly. On 12 July 1945 (Ashadh *sud* 3, V.S. 2001), accompanied by the chanting of Vedic mantras, the *murti-pratishtha* ceremony of the *murtis* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Gunatitanand Swami and Gopalanand Swami was performed by Shastriji Maharaj.

Gadhada

Alongwith the spread of Satsang, the construction of mandirs was proceeding at full speed. In Gadhada, Shriji Maharaj had personally selected and measured the site on the hill for the mandir, and had promised to dwell there along with his choicest devotee. Now the time had come when this promise was to be fulfilled. Shastriji Maharaj, with the help of the Collector of Bhavnagar, Shri Govindsinh Chudasma and Nagarsheth, Shri Mohanlal Motichand, acquired that land on the hill and with the co-operation of Bhan Khachar and descendents of Dada Khachar and Jiva Khachar constructed a beautiful marble mandir.

Before returning to Dham, Shastriji Maharaj went to Gadhada to perform *arti* and *pujan* of the *murtis* and said, "The *murti-pratishtha* ceremony will be performed by Yogiji Maharaj." Thus, after proclaiming Yogiji Maharaj as his spiritual heir, on 10 May 1951 (Vaishakh *sud* 4, V.S. 2007) Shastriji Maharaj returned to Dham. Shastriji Maharaj's passing away caused much grief to the devotees. However, as per the wish of Shastriji Maharaj, on (16 May 1951 CE), Yogiji Maharaj in the presence of nearly 50,000 devotees performed the *murti-pratishtha* ceremony of the *murtis* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Gunatitanand Swami and Gopalanand Swami. The whole atmosphere was charged with Vedic mantras and devotional songs, bringing divine bliss to the hearts of the devotees who had thronged to Gadhada to participate in this great festival.

Ahmedabad

Shastriji Maharaj had chosen a site in Shahibaug, Ahmedabad to build a mandir. He used to say that when Shriji Maharaj went to the River Sabarmati for his daily bath he sat at this spot where there was a fruit orchard in those days. In accordance with his desire a huge three-pinnacled mandir was constructed on that holy spot. Due to the

enthusiasm and deep devotion of the devotees of Ahmedabad, the construction work of the mandir was completed in a short time. On 10 May 1962 (Vaishakh *sud* 7, V.S. 2018), the *murti-pratishtha* ceremony of the marble *murtis* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami and Gopalanand Swami was performed by Yogiji Maharaj. Currently, the headquarters of BAPS are in Ahmedabad.

Bhadra (Gunatitnagar)

Yogiji Maharaj constructed a beautiful single-pinnacled mandir at this place where Mul Akshar Murti Gunatitanand Swami was born. All the devotees from Gujarat and Kathiawad willingly extended their co-operation. On 22 April 1969 (Vaishakh *sud* 6, V.S. 2025), Yogiji Maharaj performed the *murti-pratishtha* ceremony of the marble *murtis* of Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Gopalanand Swami in accordance with the Vedic traditions. This brought divine joy in the hearts of the devotees of the Halar region.

Sankari

Sankari is a small village in the Bardoli region of Surat District. Shri Somabhai Narayanbhai Patel, a well-known resident of the village, built a small mandir with the help of his fellow villagers. With a view to please Yogiji Maharaj, he decided to install the *murtis* of Akshar Purushottam in this mandir. The villagers were also pleased with this.

Suddenly, Yogiji Maharaj passed away to Dham. But he had promised, “I will come to Sankari and grant you divine bliss.” Somabhai Patel who lovingly treasured these words invited Pramukh Swami Maharaj to consecrate the *murtis*. When Pramukh Swami visited Sankari, the devotees felt as if Yogiji Maharaj himself had come to their town in the form of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. On 3 June 1971 (Jeth *sud* 10, V.S. 2027), Pramukh Swami consecrated the marble *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and Lakshmi-Narayan Dev in accordance with Vedic traditions.

We have two types of mandirs: one is *shikharbaddh* and the other *hari* mandir. The above mentioned mandirs are *shikharbaddh* mandirs where we find *murtis* of marble or *panch dhatu*. In *hari* mandirs the *murtis* are usually paintings or photographs. There are *hari* mandirs in many towns. Yogiji Maharaj has inspired people living abroad in countries like Africa, England and America to build *hari* mandirs. Daily, vegetarian food is offered to and sanctified by the *murtis, arti* is performed five times daily and the *murtis* are adorned with various garments and ornaments.

11. Shri Gurubhajan Stotram

Bhav-sambhav-bhiti-bhedanam
Sukh-sampatkarunā-niketanam;
Vrata-dān-tapah kriyā-falam

Sahajānand-gurum bhaje sadā. 1

I worship guru Sahajanand, who is the remover of the fear of birth and death, root source of happiness, wealth and compassion; and fruit of endeavours such as, spiritual observances, donations, austerities, etc.

Karunāmaya-chāru-lochanam
Sharnāyāta-janārti-mochanam;
Patitoddharanāya tatparam
Sahajānand-gurum bhaje sadā. 2

I worship guru Sahajanand, who has beautiful compassionate eyes, removes the misery of those who seek his refuge, is always ready to redeem/uplift the sinful and wicked.

Nija-tattva-pathāvabodhanam
Janatāyā svata eva durgamam;
Iti-chintya gruhita-vigraham
Sahajānand-gurum bhaje sadā. 3

I worship guru Sahajanand, who has assumed a human form with the wish to make the knowledge of his divine form, which is difficult for ordinary people to understand by their own efforts, easily available for all.

Vidhi-shambhu-mukhairnigraham
Bhav-pāthodhi-paribhramākulam;
Apidhārya mano naraprabham
Sahajānand-gurum bhaje sadā. 4

I worship guru Sahajanand, who has assumed a human body and controlled the mind, which had become agitated by its travel in the ocean of lie and which could not be controlled even by Brahma, Shiva and other deities.

Nija-pād-payoja-kirtanam
Satatam syāda bhav-jiva-gocharam;
Iti yaha kurute krat÷tsavam
Sahajānand-gurum bhaje sadā. 5

I worship guru Sahajanand, who performed/held grand *yagnas* with the noble intentio0n that the worldly *jivas* are able to continuously offer devotion at his lotus feet.

Bahirikshana-loka-mānusham
Nija-datāmbaka-darshinām Harim;
Bhajaniya-padam jagada-gurum
Sahajānand-gurum bhaje sadā. 6

I worship guru Sahajanand, the king of the world, who is seen by those with worldly eyes as human and by those whom he has granted divine vision as

Purushottam and whose lotus feet are worthy of worship.

Sharanāgata-pāpa-parvatam
Ganayitvā na tadiya-sadgunam;
Anum apyatulam hi manyate
Sahajānand-gurum bhaje sadā. 7

I worship guru Sahajanand, who overlooks the mountain-like sins of those who seek his refuge and sees only their atom-like virtues as great.

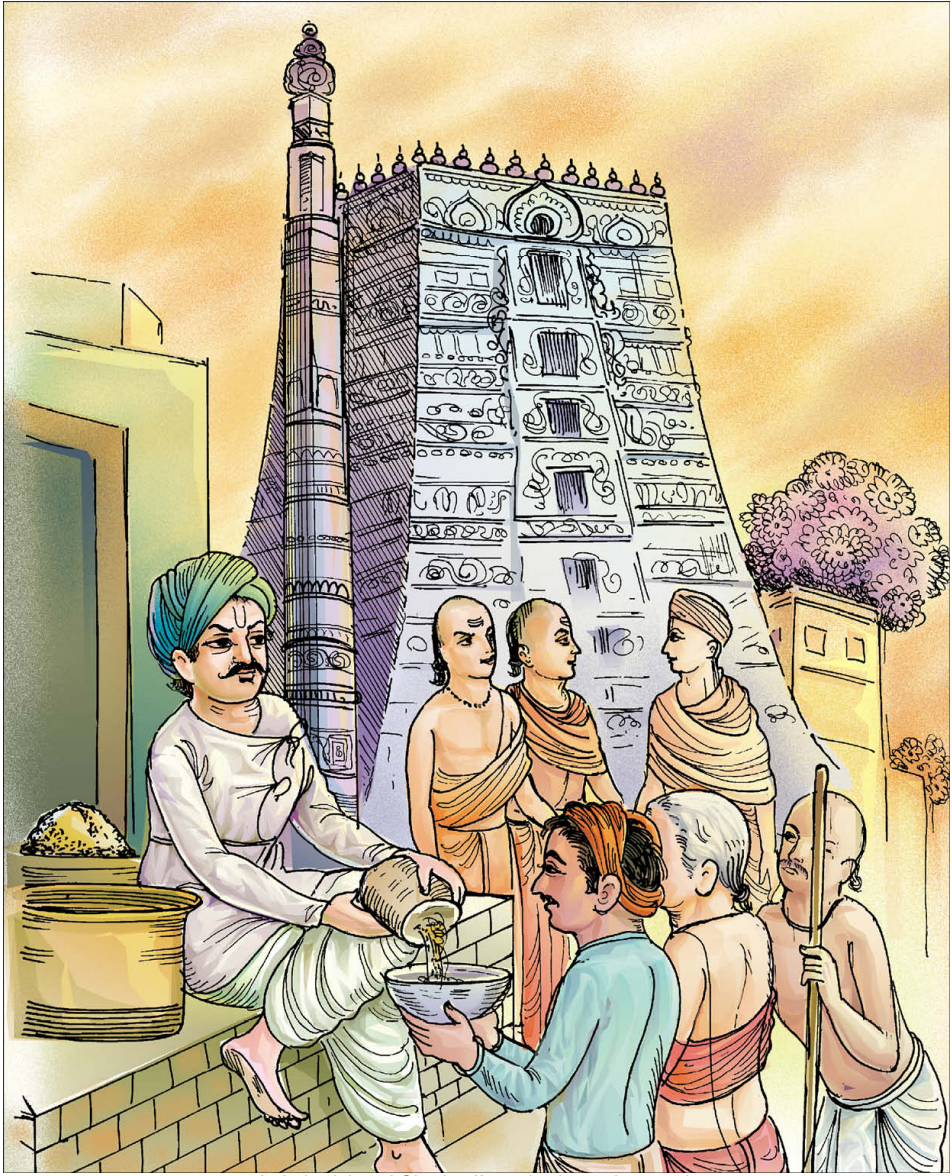
Bhav-vāridhi-moksha-sādhanam
Gururāja-prakat-sva-sangamam;
Praktikrutvān krupā-vasha
Sahajānand-gurum bhaje sadā. 8

I worship guru Sahajanand, who is the guru and means to *moksha*/liberation from the material) world for countless *jivas* and (who out of compassion has made his association/company possible.)

Bhagvan krupayā tvayā krutam
Janatāyām upakāramidasham;
Kshāmate pratikartum atra kah
Kurute dinjanastato angjalim. 9

O Bhagwan! You have compassionately granted a great favour to the people for their *moksha*. Who is capable of repaying You for this favour. [Nobody.] That is why I, Dinanath Bhatt, with folded hands bow to You.

12. Lakshmichand Sheth



Lakshmichand Sheth offers charity to the needy

Once Shriji Maharaj was addressing the holy assembly of devotees and sadhus at Kariyani. At that time, Shriji Maharaj pointed towards a little boy about eight years old and asked Ramanujanand Swami and Gopalanand Swami junior, “Do you know him?” The sadhus replied that the boy was the son of a certain devotee.

Shriji Maharaj once again asked, “I don’t want his identification in this birth. Can you tell me who he was in his last birth? Have you ever met him before?”

Sadhus replied, “No, Maharaj.”

Shriji Maharaj said, “This child is Lakshmichand Sheth of Vrindavan. He had served me and you all too and because of that today he has got my association. He is a very

noble soul."

This Lakshmichand Sheth was very rich and generous and was a great devotee of God. He had constructed a beautiful mandir of Shrirangji at Vrindavan and had erected a big pillar in its courtyard. That pillar was covered with 22 maunds of gold sheets. Although he had done so much to please God, he always served food to beggars from morning to noon without becoming proud of what he was doing. He was offering this service, not with a view to earn name and fame, but for the *moksha* of his soul. Once a sadhu of Shriji Maharaj, Sukhanand Swami, arrived at Vrindavan. At that time Sheth was offering food in charity to the needy. The sadhu stood in a corner. When all the people were served, the sadhu approached the Sheth and collected food. The Sheth asked him, "Why were you standing alone at a distance for so long?"

Sukhanand Swami replied, "I am a sadhu of Swaminarayan and have renounced women and wealth. If we touch women, we have to observe a fast, so I was standing at a distance until now." The Sheth was very pleased hearing this.

At that time two ascetics, Ramanujanand Swami and Gopalanand Swami also arrived there to collect alms. They had a discussion with Sukhanand Swami, who talked about the manifestation of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his immense spiritual prowess.

The Sheth was also listening to this story. The Sheth was suffering from insomnia, but whenever, he thought of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, he slept soundly. He developed love and reverence towards Bhagwan Swaminarayan and thought that he must be someone great.

It was during that period that Sukhanand Swami left his corporeal body and passed away to Dham. But the Sheth was longing to have darshan of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He was eager to hand over control of the Golden Pillar Mandir to Ramanujanand Swami. But the Swami politely refused, "We are in search of manifest God for the *moksha* of our soul. Therefore, what is the use of this throne?" With these words, both sadhus started for Kathiawad for the darshan of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Lakshmichand Sheth said to them, "Please take this gold and offer it to Bhagwan Swaminarayan on my behalf."

The sadhus replied, "If we keep gold with us there is the danger of being robbed or killed, therefore, we don't want it."

At last Lakshmichand Sheth gave a bottle of the best perfume and said, "Take this bottle of scent to Bhagwan Swaminarayan on my behalf and extend to him an invitation to visit Vrindavan along with his sadhus. I am prepared to bear all the expenses and will serve them to the best of my means."

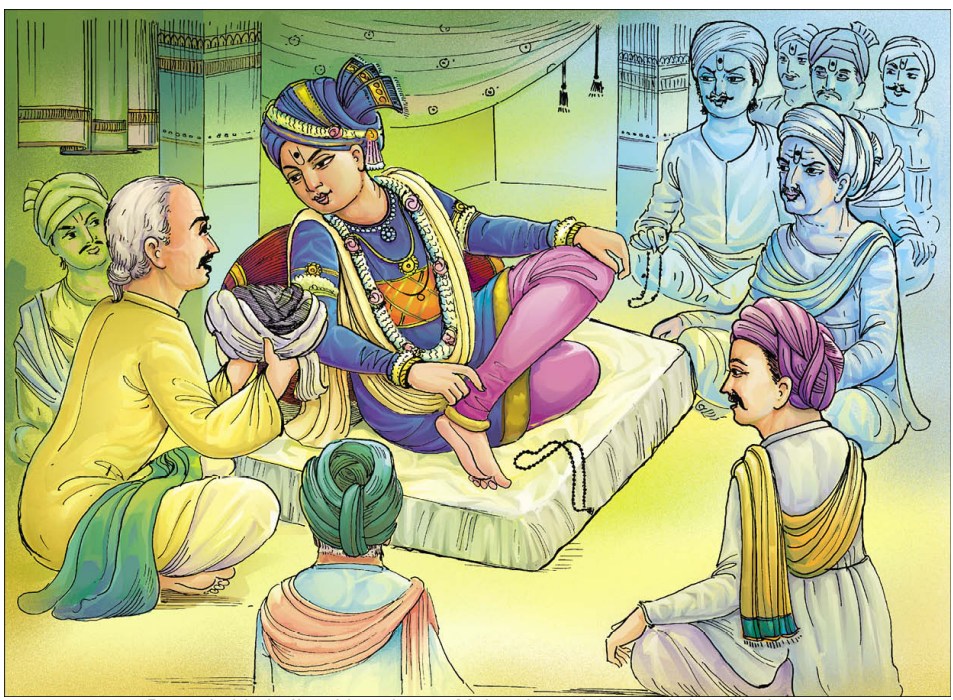
With this message the two sadhus arrived in Gadhada on foot. They were greatly impressed by the darshan of Shriji Maharaj. They offered the bottle of scent to Shriji Maharaj and conveyed the message of Lakshmichand Sheth. They told him that he was a real *mumukshu* and he had a great desire to have his darshan and had invited him to visit Vrindavan with his sadhus. These two sadhus believed Maharaj to be supreme God and received *bhagvati diksha* from him.

Shriji Maharaj took the bottle of scent and applied a little perfume on the tip of the

nose of all sadhus and devotees who were present. He said, "You will never be defamed, though others might be." He further observed, "Lakshmichand Sheth does not have enough spiritual merits so that he can have my darshan in this life. But because of this service, in his next life, he will take birth in Satsang and at that time he will have my darshan."

In Vrindavan, Lakshmichand Sheth eagerly awaited Bhagwan Swaminarayan's visit for three to four months. Eventually, he became impatient and decided to go to Kathiawad and have darshan. He mounted his horse and started for Kathiawad. But on the way, the horse suddenly went out of control, and the Sheth fell down and died. By the grace of Maharaj and on account of the merits that Lakshmichand Sheth had earned by serving sadhus, he was born in Kariyani as Nathu Patel and become one of the most beloved devotees of Shriji Maharaj. Nathu Patel had come into contact with Aksharmurti Gunatitanand Swami and had attained true knowledge from him about the divinity and supremacy of Maharaj. [This true story of Lakshmichand Sheth illustrates how lucky we are to have been gifted with Satsang and the association of our guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj – the manifest form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan himself. Lakshmichand Sheth himself was a virtuous and spiritual seeker and yet in that birth he was not lucky enough to meet God.]

13. Damodarbhai



Damodarbhai offers his turban to Maharaj to spit into and clear his throat

Damodarbhai Patel of Ahmedabad was a disciple of Sadguru Ramanand Swami. After Ramanand Swami's passing away to Dham he was greatly impressed by the unique divine prowess of Shriji Maharaj and was convinced about his supremacy.

Once, Damodarbhai had a discussion with Nathu Bhatt. Damodarbhai firmly believed that Shriji Maharaj was supreme God, the fountainhead of all the incarnations, the divine cause behind all the causes and he saw in him Purushottam Narayan. Whereas Nathu Bhatt believed, "Shri Krishna is the supreme deity." Both of them approached Shriji Maharaj and prayed, "O Maharaj! A debate is going on between us. Whose belief is right." That very moment, Shriji Maharaj put Nathu Bhatt in samadhi in which he saw innumerable *muktas,* innumerable incarnations of and Ramanand Swami, all serving Maharaj. This convinced Nathu Bhatt of Maharaj's supremacy. Then he brought Nathu Bhatt out of the samadhi. Nathu prostrated to Damodarbhai and fell at Maharaj's feet saying, "Maharaj, had Damodarbhai not talked about the supremacy of your divine form, I would not have attained ultimate liberation."

Once during a discussion, Damodarbhai had a dispute with a sadhu. The sadhu lost his temper and slapped Damodarbhai. But Damodarbhai did not utter a word nor did he become angry with him. When Shriji Maharaj came to know about this, he scolded the sadhu. At that time, Damodarbhai intervened and said, "O Maharaj! A sadhu after all is like a father and sometimes the father beats the son, so there is nothing wrong."

Shriji Maharaj replied, "All praise for the son and for the father." Thus, Damodarbhai had great reverence towards the sadhus of Shriji Maharaj. By coming into contact with Shriji Maharaj he had become a great devotee. He had lost interest in the material world and had detached himself completely from the objects of pleasure. He used to spend most of his time in the service of Shriji Maharaj. Damodarbhai was facing great difficulties in supporting his family. Therefore, at times Shriji Maharaj out of sheer love towards him, would secretly give him a precious ornament he was wearing to Damodarbhai.

While Shriji Maharaj was touring the Dandhavya region, Damodarbhai looked after the personal needs of Shriji Maharaj. He would know Maharaj's mind and serve him accordingly. Once while addressing the congregation, Maharaj started coughing. Suddenly a clot of mucus got stuck in his throat. So Maharaj got up to spit but Damodarbhai instantly extended his turban and said, "O Maharaj! Please spit into this vessel." Shriji Maharaj spat into his turban. What a great devotee he was! Such was his service that he used even his precious turban to serve Shriji Maharaj and won the favour of Shriji Maharaj.

After Shriji Maharaj's departure for Dham, Damodarbhai's wife also returned to Dham. Damodarbhai married again. Rampratapbhai came to know of this. So, when Damodarbhai went for the darshan of Nar-Narayan Dev and then called on Rampratapbhai for his darshan, the latter got up from his seat, took a stick in his hand and said, "When you were initiated into the Satsang you had taken a vow that all women except your own wife would be treated as your mother, sister and daughter. Now you have married again. Tell me from which world have you brought this

woman? Don't show me your face again and do not come to me."

Thus, Damodarbhai was always insulted and rebuked, yet he did not develop any ill-will towards the Satsang. He continued his old practice of regularly going for darshan of Nar-Narayan Dev and Rampratapbhai. Such a humble and steadfast devotee of Shriji Maharaj was Damodarbhai.

14. Satsang

Satsang is the sole means to attaining ultimate *moksha*, that is, to become beyond birth and death and experience the divine bliss of Akshardham while dwelling in a body. The glory of Satsang is infinite. God is not as pleased by *ashtang yoga*, Sankhya, dharma, effort, austerities, renunciation, pilgrimages, observances, *yagna* and the like as he is by Satsang. Therefore, Satsang is the quintessence of all the means of attaining ultimate *moksha*.

The story of the famous debate that took place between Vashishtha and Vishwamitra is well-known. Vishwamitra said, "My sixty thousand years of austerities is worth more than Satsang."

Vashishtha claimed, "The fruit of Satsang is greater than that of austerities."

Both of them went to Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh to resolve their dispute and seek their verdict. But the deities thought that if they decided the case in favour of either of the two, the loser would feel offended and curse them. So they very tactfully directed the rishis to the thousand-headed Sheshji (Sheshnag). Sheshnag proposed, "I am carrying the weight of this earth on my head. If you can lighten my burden with the power of your austerities, I will hear and decide your case."

Vishwamitra used the merits of his austerities to lift the earth but it did not budge at all. Then Vashishtha employed a little of the merits of Satsang and instantly the earth moved upwards. Sheshji observed, "Now there is no need for me to say anything. The verdict has been given." This proves the might of Satsang.

There are so many anecdotes which show that Satsang is stronger than any other spiritual means. Vrutrasur, Prahlad, Vrushaparva, Bali Raja, Banasur, Vibhishan, Sugriv, Kubja, Gajendra, Jatayu, Tuladhar Vanio, the Gopis of Vraj, wives of the rishis and many others attained *moksha* through Satsang. During Shriji Maharaj's stay on this earth, the Kathis, Kolis, Kanbis and many others who did not engage much in scriptural knowledge, austerities, observances and donations attained ultimate *moksha* through Satsang. Satsang brought about a complete spiritual transformation in the lives of Sagram Vaghri of Limdi, a prostitute of Jetalpur, a Muslim woman of Bhal, Joban Pagi, Mansinh Raja and many others.

What is Satsang? Satsang does not mean simply communion with morally good people. It is something more than that. Satsang means:

Sachchhabdena Paramabrahma sādhavashcha tadāshrayāhā;
Proktastadiyo dharmashcha shāshtrametat trikāshrayam.

The word *sat* means (1) Parabrahman Purushottam Narayan, the ever manifest divine Lord Shriji Maharaj himself, (2) Param Ekantik Sadhu having all the four qualities of dharma*, jnan*, *vairagya* and bhakti*,* (3) Ethical and moral codes propounded by God and his holy Sadhu, (4) The shastras which describe the glory of all these three. Thus, to seek communion with all these four is called Satsang,

Satsang is to seek communion with the Param Ekantik Sadhu who is in constant communion with Shriji Maharaj, who has attained perfection in all the four qualities of dharma, *jnan*, *vairagya* and bhakti and for those who seek his shelter he wishes, "As this individual is associated with me, it would be of great benefit to the individual if his desires for the world are eradicated and his affection for God is developed." To seek communion with such a sadhu wholeheartedly is called Satsang. To think of him as pure and to serve him with our actions and to sing his praise is called Satsang.

However hard one may try, one cannot succeed in eradicating worldly cravings without Satsang. That is why the scriptures give greater importance to Satsang and call it more effective than a *kalpataru* and *chintamani*. *Chintamani* can eradicate poverty, but cannot free one from the cycle of birth and death. What benefit does one earn from Satsang? Shriji Maharaj observes:

"If a person develops conviction in the guru – who is the manifest form of God – in the same way that he has conviction in the non-manifest deities, then, as a result, he attains all of the *arthas* which are described as attainable.' In fact, when he attains the company of such a *Sant,* he has, while still alive, attained he who was to be attained after death. That is to say, he has attained that which is called the highest state of enlightenment, or liberation*,* while being alive" (Gadhada III-2).

Satsangi
(Member of the Divine Fellowship)

Shriji Maharaj founded a Sampraday keeping Satsang as the chief spiritual means to *moksha*. Therefore, a devotee of Bhagwan Swaminarayan is popularly known as satsangi. One who accepts Bhagwan Swaminarayan as the Supreme God and vows to follow the rules of conduct is called a satsangi. These rules, called the panch vartman (five basic codes of conduct) have been written by Shriji Maharaj in the Shikshapatri. They are:

1. Abstain from all intoxicants.
2. Not to commit theft.
3. Not to eat flesh.
4. Not to commit adultery.
5. Not to violate social purity.

Shriji Maharaj has clearly defined the qualities of a true satsangi in the Vachanamrut. He says that just as one has atmabuddhi towards one's own body, attachment towards relations, reverence towards holy rivers and deep devotion towards the murti, if one develops atmabuddhi, attachment, reverence and devotion towards the brahmanized sadhu, one is a true satsangi. He gives greater importance to satsang than ashtang yoga, austerities, observances, donations and other means of

spiritual progress.

One who has completely withdrawn his mind from sense gratification and has linked it unto God and the God-realized Sadhu is known as a satsangi. Shriji Maharaj has also said that one who possesses the three qualities of niyam, nishchay and paksh is known as a staunch satsangi.

If one who is deeply attached to satsang encounters miseries or even humiliation in the Satsang, he would never quit the Satsang, however trying and challenging the problems may be. This attitude is exemplified by Bhagatji Maharaj and Shastriji Maharaj whose endurance was infinite. Shriji Maharaj observes, "Only such staunch satsangi Vaishnavs are my kith and kin. Such is my resolution, and all of you should also make the same resolution."

Kusang (Bad Company)

Once Vallabhacharya and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu held a discussion. Vallabhacharyaji praised *satsang* and asked Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to describe *kusang* (evil influence). Chaitanya Mahaprabhu replied, "If one seeks evil company for even a fraction of a second, that is, just long enough for a mustard seed to remain steady on the sharp point of a cow's horn, all the merits which one has earned over many births are destroyed."

Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami in his discourses has observed that even if we are touched by a gust of wind coming from the direction of a sinner all our merits earned over a period of sixty thousand years, are burnt away.

Such is the destructive influence of evil company. Just as milk which is nectarine becomes poisonous with a drop of venom from a snake's mouth, virtues such as *vairagya, vivek* and *swadharma* are destroyed by coming into contact with evil company or by putting faith in the words of an evil person. Such contact or company produces evils like lust, anger, greed, delusion, etc. Therefore, a devotee of God should always avoid evil company. While defining *kusang* Shriji Maharaj says that the worst of all types of *kusang* is the company of one who has no devotion to God and has no faith in God. There are two types of such people, the atheists and pseudo-Vedantins. An atheist does not believe in the existence of an eternal, supreme God. He believes that karma is the cause of everything. The pseudo-Vedantin believes, 'I am *brahman*'. Under this pretext, he does not hesitate to commit sins. To seek company of such people is *kusang*."

There is no greater sin than associating with the pseudo-Vedantins who in reality are ignorant persons. Therefore, those who are seeking *moksha* should never associate themselves with atheists and pseudo-Vedantins.

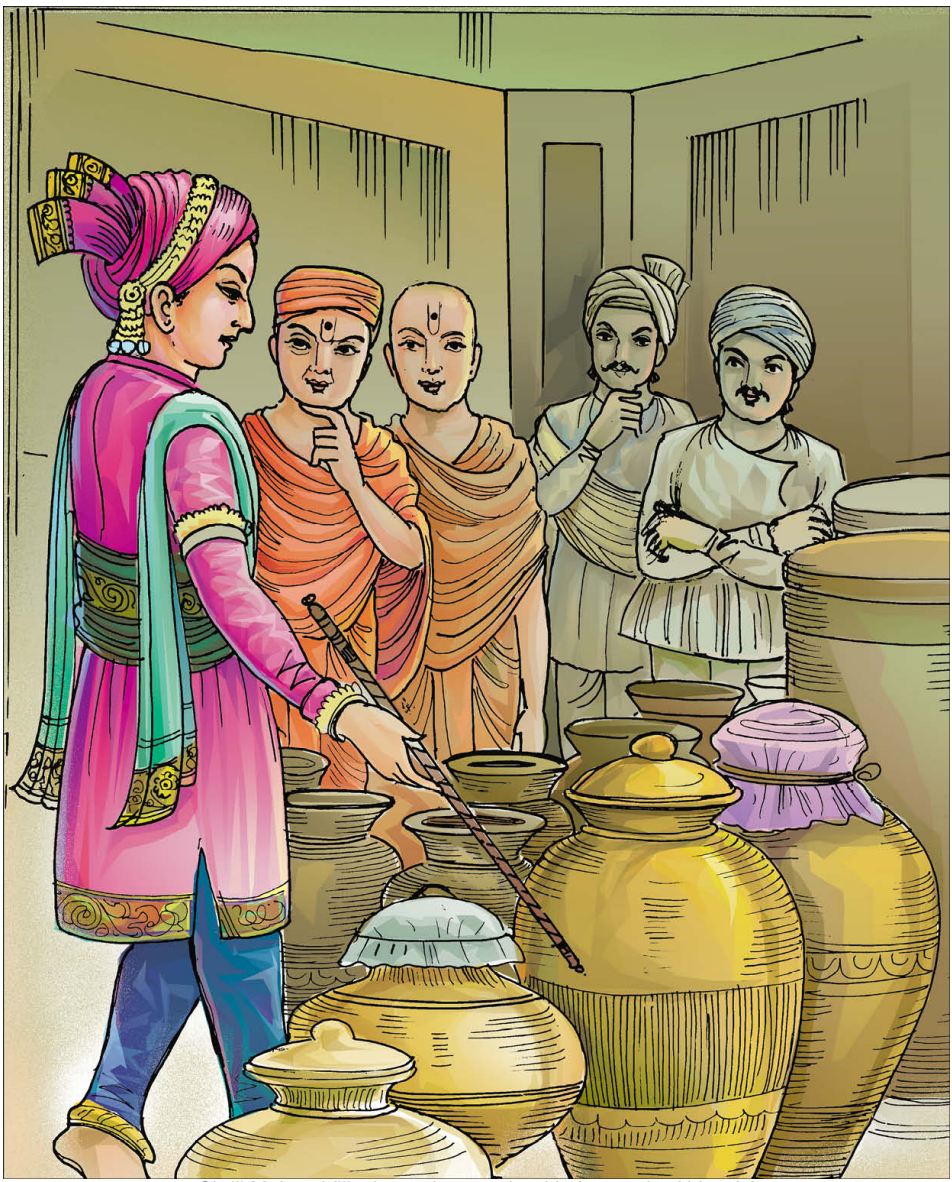
In the Swamini Vato (discourses of Gunatitanand Swami) three types of *kusang* have been described:

1. External *kusang*
2. Internal *kusang* and
3. *Kusang* within Satsang.

To associate with one who vilifies God and his Sadhu and does not practise dharma

is called external *kusang*. To indulge in sensual pleasure and to ascribe human traits to God and to his *brahmanized* Sadhu is internal *kusang*. To equate Shriji Maharaj with other incarnations, to equate the *brahmanized* Sadhu with an ordinary sadhu, to find faults with devotees and to show lack of enthusiasm or sincerity in following the religious tenets or commands is called *kusang* within Satsang. Therefore, devotees should shun these three types of evil influences.

15. Vishnudas



Shriji Maharaj fills the grain vessels with the touch of his stick

Vishnudas checked the stock and said to Shriji Maharaj, “Maharaj, this amount of foodstuff will not be enough.”

Swarupanand Swami remarked, “If there is not enough foodstuff it will bring a bad name to Lakshmiji. Why should we worry about it?”

Seeing the faith of these two disciples, Shriji Maharaj touched the containers of oil, ghee, jaggery, wheat and rice with his stick and all the containers became completely filled with the various items.

Maharaj was at the command of Vishnudas from the village of Dabhan. All the grand *yagnas* which Maharaj had performed in Dabhan were conducted in the name of Vishnudas Patel.

Vishnudas was a favourite and *ekantik* devotee of Shriji Maharaj. With the divine grace of Shriji Maharaj, he had attained *niravaran sthiti*. Thus, sitting at home he could see Shriji Maharaj, who would be touring far away. While remaining at home, he would tell other devotees, “Today, Maharaj is in this village and is exhibiting this particular divine exploit...”

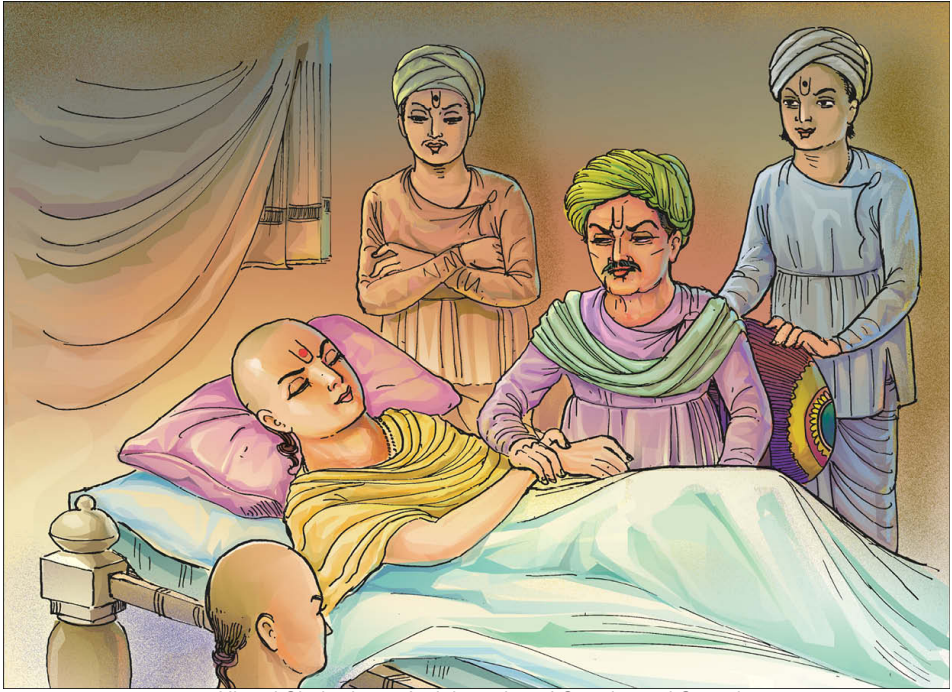
Vishnudas constantly saw divinity in Shriji Maharaj and experienced the highest level of spiritual knowledge.

Shriji Maharaj had great love for a certain mango tree in Dabhan. He was very fond of the mangoes of this tree. Therefore, Vishnudas used to carry cartloads of these mangoes to Gadhada for Shriji Maharaj, the sadhus and devotees. Shriji Maharaj was very impressed by this deep devotion of Vishnubhai and used to bless him by placing both his hands on his head and by giving the prints of his feet on his chest. Shriji Maharaj himself used to serve *ras* and *rotli* to the sadhus and devotees.

The divine exploits of Shriji Maharaj amazed and pleased everyone, but it was very difficult for people to see the divinity in his human actions. Vishnudas believed, “The divine *murti* of Shriji Maharaj which is seated in Akshardham with all his powers, is the same as the *murti* of Shriji Maharaj, together with all his divinity and powers, which I have attained here. I have before me that Shriji Maharaj, with all his powers and divinity, who dwells in his Akshardham.’

Thus, he had a complete understanding and knowledge about the manifest form of Shriji Maharaj and had no doubt that Maharaj’s seemingly human actions were also divine. He was not sceptical about Maharaj’s human actions. Is it any wonder then that Shriji Maharaj always bestowed his divine grace on such a sincere devotee?

16. Himraj Shah



Himraj Shah tries to feel the pulse of Gopalanand Swami

Himraj Shah of Sundariyana was of the Modh Vania community. He was a leading Vaishnav devotee who regularly sang bhajans in praise of Vallabhacharya. He was a great disciple of Gosaiji. On the auspicious day of *ekadashi*, he would walk to Dhandhuka to offer his respects to Gosaiji. On the day of *ekadashi* he would not even take fruits. Of his three sons, the eldest one named Vanasha, would talk to his father about the glory of Swaminarayan. Himraj used to say, "There is only one Swami and that is Vallabh Swami, the rest are like *devas* to me." Himraj Shah had such staunch faith in Vallabhacharya.

Once *yogamurti* Gopalanand Swami visited Sundariyana. Nobody could convince Himrajbhai to go to Gopalanand Swami. Himrajbhai was an expert in Ayurveda. Out of a sheer sense of service, he used to serve sadhus. Once Vanasha, under the pretext that Gopalanand Swami was not keeping well, brought his father to the mandir to examine Gopalanand Swami.

Gopalanand Swami was lying on his bed, so Himraj Shah sat near the bed and held his wrist to examine his pulse. But he failed to find his pulse.

He tried to find the pulse in the Swami's hand, leg, throat, thigh and other places, but nowhere could he feel the pulse. However, throughout the examination Gopalanand Swami remained luminous and showed all external signs of life. Himrajbhai was greatly puzzled. "This does not seem to be an ordinary man, I am sure he must have mastered *ashtang yoga.* This Gopalanand Swami seems as great as Vallabh Swami. Naturally, his guru Swaminarayan, must be God." He instantly laid his head at the feet of Gopalanand Swami. He was now convinced about the form of Maharaj and

became a *satsangi,* receiving *vartman* from Gopalanand Swami.

After this, he began to worship Shriji Maharaj. His relatives could not tolerate this change in him. They started criticizing, "Why have you given up the faith of your forefathers?"

Himraj would firmly reply, "Sahajanand Swami himself is the incarnation of supreme God. Just as the Modh Vanias gave up the religion of their forefathers when Vitthalnathji manifested and sought shelter unto Vitthalnathji, in the same manner, I too, have sought the shelter of Sahajanand Swami, and I think I have not done anything wrong."

Even Gosaiji from Dhandhuka went to Sundariyana to convince Himrajbhai, but he was as firm as a rock. The Gosaiji sent baskets of sweets as *prasad* but Himrajbhai returned them. The Gosaiji was crestfallen and said, "Swaminarayan has hypnotized him by some black magic and at an appropriate time, he should be excommunicated from the community." Toying with these ideas, Gosaiji returned to Dhandhuka and instigated the others against Himraj Sheth. He said, "Nobody should maintain any type of interaction with Himrajbhai. Nobody should take meals on any occasion at his place. Even if one's own brother has become *satsangi* the relationship should be broken." When many people brought to the attention of Gosaiji that nobody can be forced to follow a particular faith, Gosaiji replied, "No mercy should be shown towards converts." Hearing the words of their guru, they kept quiet.

In this manner some six years passed. Himrajbhai was approaching his end. He called his three sons Vanasha, Jethasha and Punjasha. He also called his nephew Bhagabhai and advised, "This life and this world are perishable and subject to death and decay. Therefore, be patient and never give up *satsang* out of fear or the threat of others. You must act in the manner that will please Shriji Maharaj." Thus, he breathed his last thinking of Shriji Maharaj. Then the last rites were to be performed according to the customs and traditions of the community. Himraj Shah was a very important person, so his sons sent letters to various places informing everyone about the post-death rites. They made all the preparations for the ritual dinner and purchased ghee, sugar, jaggery and other foodstuff. The Vanias were waiting for this opportunity. They came to Dhandhuka with a message from Gosaiji to bring Himraj's sons back to the Vaishnav fold. The Vania Sheths said, "If you continue to remain in the Satsang you will be excommunicated. You will spoil the last rites ceremony of your father. Therefore, break the *kanthi* of Swaminarayan and throw it away. Then only the people of your community will accept your food."

Vanasha replied, "Just as one does not leave his mansion because of the nuisance of mosquitoes, in the same manner, we are not going to leave the Swaminarayan faith and our *kanthi* out of fear of our community. We are not going to change our faith even if our life is at stake." As a last resort the Vanias told the brothers to remove the *kanthi* for the day only. They also suggested that the brothers may remain indoors till the dinner was over. Thus, they tried their best to make these brothers remove their *kanthi.* But the brothers were very firm. They replied, "Even if the world ends today, we are not going to leave Satsang."

The Sheths returned to Dhandhuka and letters were sent to every town and village stating, “Those who attend the community dinner arranged as a part of the last rites of Himrajbhai will be excommunicated.”

When Vanasha received this news, he sent his son, Hirabhai, and Bhagabhai to Gadhpur. Both informed Shriji Maharaj about the ugly incident and invited him to come to Sundariyana with his sadhus. Shriji Maharaj observed, “These brothers have been excommunicated from their community for our sake and have shown staunch allegiance.” Tears of joy rolled from the eyes of Shriji Maharaj who became very happy and immediately decided to go to Sundariyana along with the sadhus and devotees.

Shriji Maharaj, accompanied by his sadhus and devotees, arrived at Sundariyana. Maharaj stayed in the house of Jethasha and separate arrangements were made for the sadhus and devotees. Everyday, new dishes were prepared and the brothers used to serve Maharaj, the sadhus and devotees with love. Besides this, Maharaj would also play *ras* with the sadhus and conduct discourses. Thus, he bestowed divine bliss in various forms upon everyone.

On the day of Vasant Panchmi, Shriji Maharaj sprayed colours on the sadhus and devotees and gave his coloured clothes as a sanctified memento to all three brothers. He gave his turban to Vanasha and trousers to Punjasha, upper garment to Bhagabhai and coat to Jethasha.[1]

Thus, Shriji Maharaj stayed at Sundariyana for five days and bestowed his choicest bliss on his devotees. When Maharaj decided to leave, Vanasha requested Maharaj to extend his stay as a lot of foodstuff still remained unused. As Vanasha and other members of the family had sincerely served the holy company, Maharaj thought that it was not proper to extend his stay. He took their leave and Vanasha gave two sweet balls to each of the devotees for their journey. Shriji Maharaj then returned to Gadhada.

Thus, Himraj Shah and his sons, even in the face of strong opposition from their community, remained staunch in Satsang. They did not care even for their lives. As a result, Shriji Maharaj bestowed upon them his choicest blessings and divine bliss. We, too, should remain as firm as these brave devotees.

17. Vachanamrut

Gadhada I 8
Engaging the Indriyas in the Service of God and His Sant

On Magshar *sudi* 11, Samvat 1876 [27 November 1819], Shriji Maharaj was sitting in Dada Khachar’s *darbar* in Gadhada. He was dressed entirely in white clothes. At that time, an assembly of sadhus as well as devotees from various places had gathered before him.

Thereupon Shriji Maharaj said, “If the *vruttis* of the *indriyas* are engaged in the

service of Shri Krishna Bhagwan and his Bhakta, then the *antahkaran* is purified and the sins that have been attached to the *jiva* since time immemorial are destroyed. On the other hand, if the *vruttis* of the *indriyas* are directed towards women and other *vishays*, then one's *antahkaran* becomes polluted and one falls from the path of liberation.

"Therefore, one should indulge in the *vishays* only as prescribed in the scriptures; but one should never indulge in them by transgressing the regulations that are described in the scriptures. Also, one should keep association with the Sant and should shun bad company. In this manner, when a person shuns bad company and maintains association with the Sant, the sense of I-ness that he harbours towards his body and the sense of my-ness that he harbours towards his bodily relations are eradicated. He also develops profound love for God and vairagya towards everything except God."

Explanation

Veda Vyas has said in the Shrimad Bhagvat that God, the merciful, has given *buddhi, indriyas* and mind to every human being, so one should enjoy the sense objects without transgressing the codes laid down by the scriptures and strive for one's *moksha*. If we can employ our nose, eyes, ears and other sense organs in the service of God, our *antahkaran* is purified.

The eyes must behold only God, his holy Sadhu and the *murtis* of God; the ears should listen only to religious discourses; the tongue should sing the praises of God and his Sadhu and only eat food which has been offered to God; the nose should smell those flowers which are offered to God; the skin should come into contact with only God and his Sadhu. All the senses should be employed in activities related to God so that the *antahkaran* may be purified and the memory of God and his Sadhu remains forever in our mind.

However, we must also think of those obstacles which we meet in our struggle to attain *moksha*, which is our ultimate goal. Our ego and self-love are at the root of all our miseries. This I-ness and mine-ness towards our bodily relations lure us away from God.

'I' and 'Mine' constitute *maya*. To help us overcome this *maya* Shriji Maharaj has guided us in this Vachanamrut. He says that "one should indulge in the *vishays* only as prescribed in the scriptures." So long as a river does not overflow its banks, it benefits all but when it crosses the limits of the banks and there is flooding, it causes difficulty to everyone. Therefore, by indulging in sense gratification, ignoring the commands of the scriptures, not only do we suffer ourselves but we also cause grief to others.

In order to live according to the tenets of religion and dissolve our ego, we must seek the company of sadhus. Communion with a true Sadhu and service to him is the sole and true key to the *jiva*'s spiritual progress. Shriji Maharaj says that we should shun evil company. Seeking the company of the Sadhu and avoiding the company of the wicked are equally important. Just as a little spark can ignite a heap of gunpowder, even momentary contact with evil company can wipe out all our *satsang*. Momentary *kusang* negates the fruits of *satsang.* Therefore, one should remain aloof from evil

company and turn one's thoughts, speech and actions towards the *brahmanized* Sadhu, who is the ideal devotee of God, and seek communion with him. Then only will our ego and attachment be dissolved and a unique sense of deep devotion and affection towards God be born. One then experiences divine bliss incessantly and develops detachment towards all objects other than God. One feels everything except God and his Sadhu as illusory.

Gadhada I 16
Wisdom

On Magshar *vadi* 4, Samvat 1876 [5 December 1819], Shriji Maharaj was sitting in Dada Khachar's *darbar* in Gadhada. He was dressed entirely in white clothes. At that time, an assembly of sadhus as well as devotees from various places had gathered before him.

Thereupon Shriji Maharaj said, "A wise devotee of God who can discern between *sat* and *asat* identifies the flaws within himself and thoughtfully eradicates them. He also rejects any apparent flaws he perceives in the *Sant* or a *satsangi* and imbibes only their virtues. Moreover, he never perceives any faults whatsoever in God. In addition, he accepts whatever words of advice God and the *Sant* offer as the highest truth but does not doubt their words at all. Thus, when the *Sant* tells him, 'You are distinct from the mind, body, *indriyas* and *prans*; you are *satya*; you are the knower of the body, *indriyas* and *prans*, which are all *asatya*' – he accepts this to be the truth. He then behaves as the *atma* – distinct from them all – but never follows the instincts of his own mind.

"Furthermore, such a person identifies those objects and evil company that may cause bondage or raise deficiencies in his *ekantik* dharma and shuns them; but he does not become bound by them. Also, he imbibes positive thoughts and avoids negative thoughts. One who behaves in this manner should be known to possess wisdom."

Explanation

In Vachanamrut, Gadhada I 6, Shriji Maharaj has said that one who is aware of one's own moral flaws has discrimination and one who only points at shortcomings in others lacks discrimination. One who wants to progress in *satsang* must become aware of one's own flaws and should discard them thoughtfully.

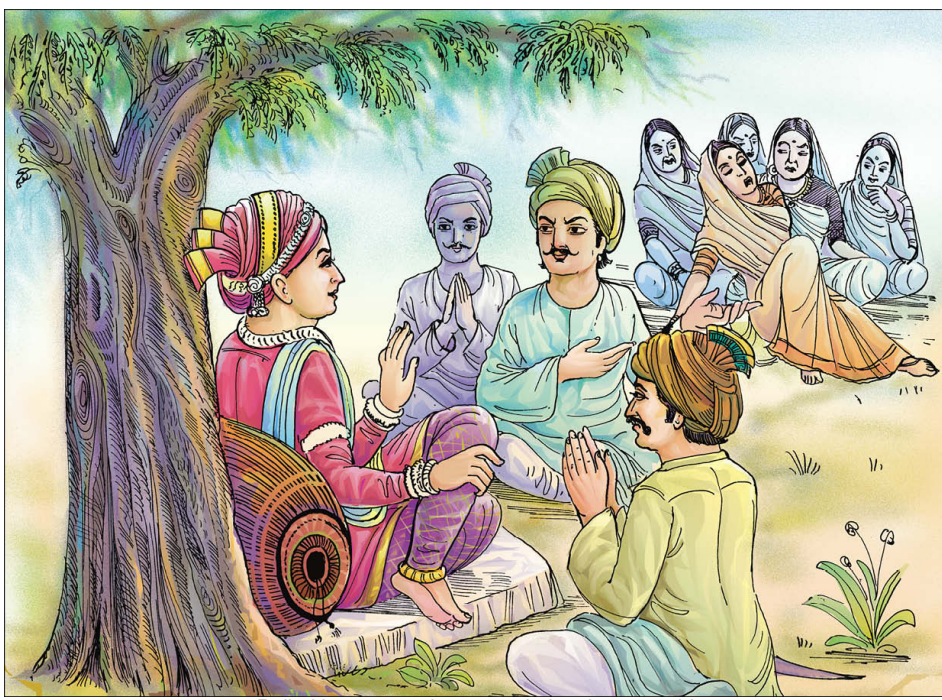
Some people do become aware of their flaws, but they never try to overcome them. To make sincere efforts to overcome one's shortcomings is also an act of discrimination, because by conscious referring to one's own virtues, one's ego gets inflated. There are no flaws or shortcomings in God or his holy Sadhu but it is the faultfinding attitude of people which invents such flaws. A devotee with discretion never sees flaws in God and his holy Sadhu.

Besides this, he accepts the precepts taught by God and his Sadhu as the absolute truth. To cast even a little doubt in the precepts preached by God or the Sadhu is an act of indiscretion. In our daily life we put faith in the words of elders and the experienced and we meet with success. God and his holy Sadhu who guide us on our path of spiritual progress have no selfish motives. They advise us and point out our

shortcomings for our own benefit. With the firm faith that they will never lead us astray, one should practice *satsang* and one's indiscriminate tendencies will be overcome.

"This body is not your real form because the body and organs are perishable. Your *atma* is your true form." A devotee with discrimination puts faith in this words of the Satpurush and resists the temptations of the mind. He follows the dictates of the *atma*. In other words, he acts according to the injunctions and rules laid down by God and his Sadhu. He is never tempted by the binding material objects of the world. He recognizes discord and disunity and keeps himself away from it. He rejects those evil thoughts which divert him from his spiritual progress. He imbibes those good ideas which help him ascend on the path of spiritual progress. This is said to be true discrimination.

18. Rajbai



Rajbai loses consciousness during the assembly

A woman called Rajbai of the village Vankia was an *ekantik* devotee of Shriji Maharaj. She was the daughter of Jivubai's maternal aunt. Jivubai was living at Gadhpur. Rajbai was attracted towards Shriji Maharaj when she first had darshan at Gadhada. She realized that Shriji Maharaj was supreme God.

She was not interested in marriage. She had resolved to serve Shriji Maharaj by observing absolute celibacy in all the eight forms and to deny the body all the pleasures of the senses.

She was to be betrothed, but she plainly refused to be engaged. The would be in-laws had sent the customary sari and coconut. Her mother kept those things on ledge and showed the sari to Rajbai saying, ''Raju, look at this sari." Rajbai was displeased and said, "Set it ablaze." And soon the sari was ablaze. Even then she was betrothed against her own wishes.

On the day of her marriage, when the marriage party arrived at Rajbai's house and the bridegroom entered the special place where the marriage was to be solemnized, Rajbai remembered Shriji Maharaj, attained samadhi and lay there like a corpse. At the marriage altar, Rajbai's place was taken by one of her maids. Rajbai was placed in a cart and was sent to the house of the bridegroom. On her way she continued to sing bhajans. At night when her husband entered the bedroom, Rajbai was meditating on Shriji Maharaj. The husband, instead of Rajbai, saw a fierce lion sitting on the cot. He gave out a wild scream and ran out of the room. He went to his mother and said, "I don't want this woman." He gave a note to her and sent her away to Gadhada.

Once, Shriji Maharaj was addressing a holy assembly under a neem tree. Rajbai's relatives came there and prayed to Maharaj, "Maharaj! Please order Rajbai to return home." Maharaj sent word to Rajbai who was sitting in the women's wing of the assembly. Maharaj said to her, "Please return to your husband's house."

As soon as she heard these words she fainted and blood oozed from all the pores of her skin. People thought that Rajbai would die, so they requested Maharaj, "O Maharaj! Rajbai is a great ascetic. Therefore, please bless her that she recovers." Immediately Shriji Maharaj approached her unconscious body and said, "Oh Rajbai! You may observe absolute celibacy and stay here to serve me." Soon, life returned to the unconscious Rajbai. She got up and fell at the feet of Shriji Maharaj. Maharaj asked her, "Why did you feel bad about my suggestion?"

Rajbai, replied, "O Maharaj! Haven't I experienced worldly pleasures in all my previous births? In all my births I must have consumed enough mother's milk which could easily fill the oceans. I have taken birth so many times and have indulged in sense gratification. In this birth I am determined to observe absolute celibacy and serve you wholeheartedly. When you gave me a command to return to my husband, I thought that if I didn't do accordingly I would be guilty of disobeying your command. Therefore, I couldn't bear it and fainted. But when you asked me to observe celibacy and serve you, I became very happy."

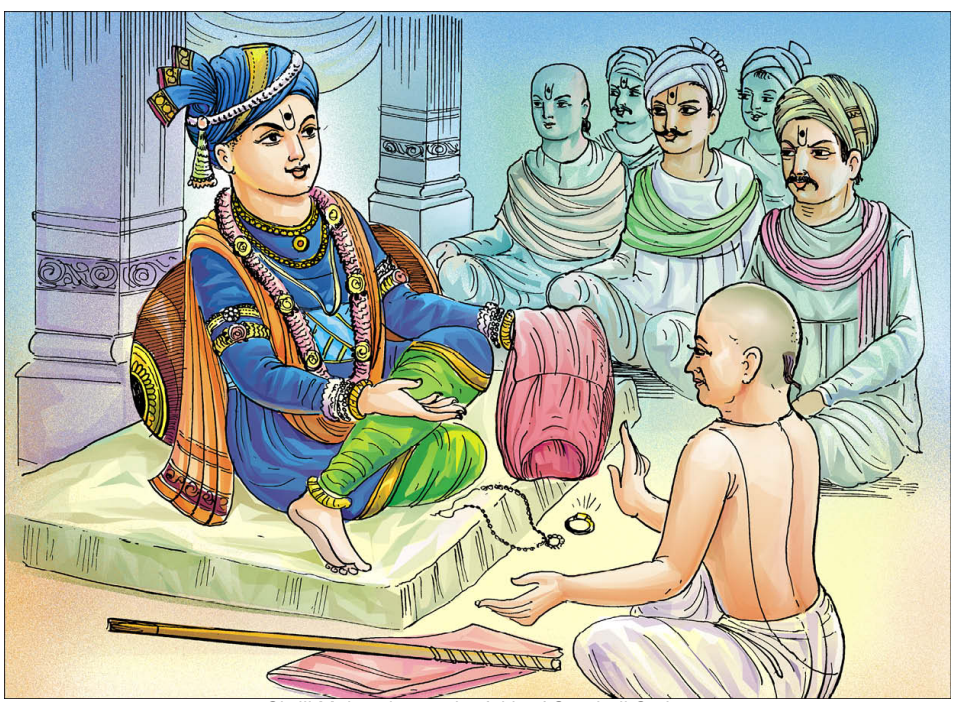
Once, Shriji Maharaj was seated in the eastern veranda near the room of Vasudev Narayan. As it was summer, the sadhus had wet the ground by spraying water on it. At that time Rajbai had served Maharaj with *ras* and *rotli* and had performed *pujan* through Dada Khachar and offered clothes and ornaments.

By the grace and will of Shriji Maharaj, Rajbai attained samadhi. In the samadhi she saw the luminous divine figure of Shriji Maharaj seated on a divine throne in Akshardham. Brahma and other deities showered flowers and sandalwood powder on Shriji Maharaj and Rajbai. Then Shriji Maharaj said, "Today, Rajbai has served us with sweet mango juice and so we don't feel the heat of the summer." Such was the devotion of Rajbai. When the relatives saw Rajbai's firm devotion towards Shriji

Maharaj, they too became his devotees and were convinced that Shriji Maharaj is manifest God.

Rajbai's detachment was intense. She used to keep herself at least ten yards away from men; she wore thick, coarse clothes; ate very little and slept on the ground. Her celibacy was so absolute that after her death when Dada Khachar poured ghee on her funeral pyre for cremation, the fire did not light. Then Gopalanand Swami came forward and said, "Tell the fire deity that the *sati* has left and this is just her body, therefore there is nothing wrong in touching her body." No sooner did Gopalanand Swami complete these words, the fire was ablaze. She firmly adhered to the principles of celibacy, which was like walking on a razor's edge. Because of her deep devotion towards Shriji Maharaj, she has earned her place among the immortal names of the great devotees in the Satsang.

19. Sundarji Suthar



Shriji Maharaj tests the faith of Sundarji Suthar

"Who is that?"

"Maharaj! Your servant."

Maharaj smiled and asked, "What are the qualities of a servant?"

"To act as per the wishes of his master."

Then Shriji Maharaj said, "If you are a servant then discard your clothes and ornaments and renounce." At that very moment, Sundarjibhai discarded his clothes and

ornaments, had his head and face clean-shaved and renounced. Sundarji Suthar was secretary to the king of Kutch. He was a devotee of Ramanand Swami, who had helped him realize the divinity of Shriji Maharaj. Thereafter, he had become a staunch devotee of Shriji Maharaj.

Once, he had arrived in Gondal with the marriage party of the prince of the king of Bhuj. On arriving at Gondal he learnt that Maharaj was camping at Bandhia. Soon he asked the guards to look after the marriage party and he went to Bandhia for the darshan of Maharaj. Maharaj was the guest of Mulu Khachar. In order to test the devotion of Sundarjibhai, Maharaj asked him to renounce and initiated him into the sadhu-fold. Then immediately he asked him to go on a pilgrimage to Kashi. Sundarjibhai had firm faith in Maharaj, therefore, without any doubts he set out for Kashi.

Shriji Maharaj talked to Muktanand Swami and said, “What a wonderful thing I have done. I have made a king’s minister renounce.”

Muktanand Swami said, “Do you call it a great deed? There are many harassing us in Kathiawad but the atmosphere in Kutch was very congenial. Now Jagjivan Karbhari, who dislikes us, will create problems for us. We will not even get anything to eat in Kutch. Moreover, Sundarjibhai was sent in charge of the marriage party. So, when the king comes to know about this, he will think that Swaminarayan has created an obstruction in his auspicious work and he will become angry.”

After listening to Muktanand Swami, Shriji Maharaj commanded, “Call him back.” Mulji Brahmachari was sent to call Sundarjibhai. He returned to Maharaj and prostrated before him. Once again Maharaj asked, “Who has come?”

“Your servant has come, Maharaj.”

Maharaj smiled and said, “If you are a servant then put on your original clothes, take your shield and sword and lead the prince to the bride’s house.”

As commanded by Maharaj, Sundarjibhai, who had become a sadhu, once again donned the clothes and ornaments of a householder. But how could he get his beard and moustache back? When he once again rejoined the marriage party everyone asked, “Why this inauspicious look while performing an auspicious duty?” Sundarjibhai replied, “I had gone for the darshan of my family deity. The Brahmins there told me that only if I remove my beard and moustache, the family deity will be propitiated. Therefore, I have removed my hair, beard and moustache.” The members of the marriage party were satisfied with the explanation.

Thus, one who has realized God would do anything for the sake of God and his Sadhu. It is very difficult to ignore public criticism but Sundarjibhai never worried about it. However, at the same time, this incident made Sundarjibhai a little vain. He said to Maharaj, “Maharaj! Do not put others through such a stern test. They will not be able to endure it.”

Maharaj remained quiet at that time. But when he visited Bhadra, he sent a letter to eighteen devotees asking them to go to Ramdas Swami at Jetalpur to renounce and then to meet him in Bhuj. When all the eighteen devotees came to Bhuj after becoming sadhus, Shriji Maharaj embraced them with great love. Then he introduced them all to

Sundarjibhai and said that they were all big landlords and village chiefs. When Sundarjibhai looked at them, his vanity vanished.

In Bhuj a Nagar Brahmin called Jagjivan was one of the eight ministers of the king. He was intensely jealous of Shriji Maharaj. But his wife was a great devotee of Maharaj. Whenever Maharaj visited Bhuj for the spread of *satsang* he stayed with Sundarjibhai, who stood by Maharaj even at the cost of his own life. Such a great devotee was Sundarjibhai that he has earned an immortal place in the Satsang.

20. Lila Chintamani

In the following verses, Premanand Swami has vividly described Shriji Maharaj's daily routine and divine actions. Collectively they comprise the first half of the *cheshtha.* Every *satsangi* should sing the *cheshtha* at night before retiring to bed. The second part of the *cheshtha* is incuded in *Kishore Satsang Pravin*, Chapter 21.

Swabhavik Cheshta

Rag: Garbi

Pad 1

Pratham Shri Harine re, charane shish namāvu;
Nautam lilā re, Nārāyanni gāvu. 1
Motā munivar re, ekāgra kari manne;
Jene kāje re, seve jāi vanne. 2
Āsan sādhi re, dhyān dharine dhāre;
Jeni cheshtā re, sneh kari sambhāre. 3
Sahaj swābhāvik re, prakruti Purushottamni;
Suntā sajni re, bik matāde jamni. 4
Gāvu hete re, Harinā charitra sambhāri;
Pāvan karjyo re, Prabhuji buddhi māri. 5
Sahaj swabhāve re, bethā hoy Hari jyāre;
Tulsini mālā re, kar lai ferve tyāre. 6
Ramuj kartā re, rājivnen rupālā;
Koi harijanni re, māgi laine mālā. 7
Bevdi rākhi re, babbe mankā jode;
Ferve tāni re, kaik mālā tode. 8
Vātu kare re, ramuj karine hastā;
Bheli kari re, mālā karmā ghastā. 9
Kyārek minchi re, netrakamalne Swāmi;
Premānand kahe re, dhyān dhare bahunāmi. 10

Pad 2

Sāmbhal saiyar re, lilā Natnāgarni;
Suntā sukhdu re, āpe Sukhsāgarni. 1
Netrakamalne re, rākhi ughādā kyāre;
Dhyān dharine re, bese jivan bā're. 2
Kyārek chamki re, dhyān karantā jāge;
Jotā jivan re, janmamaran dukh bhāge. 3
Potā āgal re, sabhā bharāi bese;
Sant harijan re, sāmu joi rahe chhe. 4
Dhyān dharine re, bethā hoy Hari pote;
Sant harijan re, trupta na thāye jote. 5
Sādhu kirtan re, gāye vajādi vājā;
Temne joi re, magan thāye Mahārājā. 6
Temni bhelā re, chapti vajādi gāye;
Sant harijan re, nirakhi rāji thāye. 7
Kyārek sādhu re, gāy vajādi tāli;
Bhelā gāye re, tāli de Vanmāli. 8
Āgal sādhu re, kirtan gāy jyāre;
Potā āgal re, kathā vanchāy tyāre. 9
Pote vārtā re, kartā hoy bahunāmi;
Khastā āve re, Premānandnā Swāmi. 10

Pad 3

Manushyalilā re, kartā mangalkāri;
Bhaktasabhāmā re, bethā bhavbhayhāri. 1
Jene jotā re, jāye jag āsakti;
Gnān vairāgya re, dharma sahit je bhakti. 2
Te sambandhi re, vārtā kartā bhāri;
Hari samjāve re, nij janne sukhkāri. 3
Yoga ne Sānkhya re, Pancharātra Vedānta;
E shāstrano re, rahasya kahe kari khānt. 4
Jyāre harijan re, desh deshnā āve;
Utsav upar re, pujā bahuvidh lāve. 5
Jāni potānā re, sevakjan Avināshi;
Temni pujā re, grahan kare sukhrāshi. 6
Bhakta potānā re, tene Shyām sujān;
Dhyān karāvi re, kheche nādi prān. 7
Dhyānmāthi re, uthāde nij janne;
Dehmā lāve re, prān indriya manne. 8
Sant sabhāmā re, bethā hoy avināsh;
Koi harijanne re, tedvo hoy pās. 9
Paheli āngli re, netratani kari sān;
Premānand kahe re, sād kare Bhagwān. 10

Pad 4

Mohanjini re, lilā ati sukhkāri;
Ānand āpe re, suntā nyāri nyāri. 1
Kyārek vāto re, kare munivar sāthe;
Guchchh gulābnā re, chole chhe be hāthe. 2
Shital jāni re, limbu hār gulābi;
Tene rākhe re, ānkhyo upar dābi. 3
Kyārek pote re, rājipāmā hoye;
Vāto kare re, kathā vanchāve toye. 4
Sāmbhale kirtan re, pote kāik vichāre;
Puchhvā āve re, jamvānu koi tyāre. 5
Hār chadhāve re, pujā karvā āve;
Tenā upar re, bahu khiji risāve. 6
Kathā sāmbhaltā re, hare hare kahi bole;
Marma kathāno re, suni magan thai dole. 7
Bhān kathāmā re, biji kriyā māye;
Kyārek achānak re, jamtā hare bolāye. 8
Thāye smruti re, potāne jyāre teni;
Thoduk hase re, bhakta sāmu joi beni. 9
Em Hari nit nit re, ānand ras varsāve;
E lilā ras re, joi Premānand gāve. 10

Pad 5

Sāmbhal sajni re, divya swarup Murāri;
Kare charitra re, manushya vigrah dhāri. 1
Thayā manohar re, Mohan manushya jevā;
Rup anupam re, nij janne sukh devā. 2
Kyārek dholiye re, bese Shri Ghanshyām;
Kyārek bese re, chākle purankām. 3
Kyārek godadu re, ochhāde sahit;
Pātharyu hoye re, te par bese prite. 4
Kyārek dholiyā re, upar takiyo bhāli;
Te par bese re, Shyām palāthi vāli. 5
Ghanuk bese re, takiye othingan daine;
Kyārek gothan re, bāndhe khes laine. 6
Kyārek rāji re, thāy atishe āli;
Sant harijanne re, bhete bāthmā ghāli. 7
Kyārek māthe re, lai mele be hāth;
Chhāti māhe re, charankamal de Nāth. 8
Kyārek āpe re, hār torā Girdhāri;
Kyārek āpe re, angnā vastra utāri. 9
Kyārek āpe re, prasādinā thāl;
Premānand kahe re, bhaktatanā pratipāl. 10

Pad 6

Evā kare re, charitra pāvankāri;
Shukji sarkhā re, gāve nit sambhāri. 1
Kyārek jibhne re, dānt tale dabāve;
Dābe jamne re, padkhe sahaj swabhāve. 2
Chhink jyāre āve re, tyāre rumāl laine;
Chhink khāye re, mukh par ādo daine. 3
Ramuj āni re, hase ati Ghanshyām;
Mukh par ādo re, rumāl dai sukhdhām. 4
Kyārek vātu re, kartā thakā Dev;
Chhede rumālne re, val didhāni tev. 5
Ati dayālu re, swabhāv chhe Swāmino;
Pardukhhāri re, vāri bahunāmino. 6
Koine dukhiyo re, dekhi na khamāye;
Dayā āni re, ati āklā thāye. 7
Anna dhan vastra re, āpine dukh tāle;
Karunā drashti re, dekhi vānaj vāle. 8
Dābe khabhe re, khes ādsode nākhi;
Chāle jamnā re, karmā rumāl rākhi. 9
Kyārek dābo re, kar ked upar meli;
Chāle vahālo re, Premānandno heli. 10

Pad 7

Nit nit nautam re, lilā kare Harirāy;
Gātā suntā re, harijan rāji thāy. 1
Sahaj swabhāve re, utāvlā bahu chāle;
Het karine re, bolāve bahu vahāle. 2
Kyārek ghodle re, chadvu hoy tyāre;
Kyārek sant ne re, pirasvā padhāre. 3
Tyāre dābe re, khabhe khesne āni;
Khesne bāndhe re, ked sangāthe tāni. 4
Pirase lādu re, jalebi Ghanshyām;
Janas jamyāni re, lai lai tenā nām. 5
Fare pangatmā re, vāramvār Mahārāj;
Sant harijanne re, pirasvāne kāj. 6
Shraddhā bhakti re, ati ghani pirastā;
Koinā mukhmā re, āpe lādu hastā. 7
Pāchhli rātri re, chār ghadi rahe tyāre;
Dātan karvā re, uthe Hari te vāre. 8
Nhāvā bese re, Nāth palāthi vāli;
Kar lai kalashyo re, jal dhole Vanmāli. 9
Kore vastre re, kari sharirne luve;
Premānand kahe re, harijan sarve juve. 10

Pad 8

Rudā shobhe re, nāhine ubhā hoye;
Vastra paherelu re, sāthal vachche nichove. 1
Pag sāthalne re, luhine sārangpāni;
Korā khesne re, pahere sāri pethe tāni. 2
Odhi uparni re, reshmi korni vahāle;
Āve jamvā re, chākhadiye chadhi chāle. 3
Māthe uparni re, odhi bese jamvā;
Kān ughādā re, rākhe mujne gamvā. 4
Jamtā dābā re, pagni palāthi vāli;
Te par dābo re, kar mele Vanmāli. 5
Jamnā pagne re, rākhi ubho Shyām;
Te par jamno re, kar mele Sukhdhām. 6
Rudi rite re, jame devnā Dev;
Vāre vāre re, pāni pidhāni tev. 7
Janas swādu re, janāye jamtā jamtā;
Pāse harijan re, bethā hoy mangamtā. 8
Temne āpi re, pachhi pote jame;
Jamtā Jivan re, harijanne man game. 9
Ferve jamtā re, pet upar Hari hāth;
Odkār khāye re, Premānandnā Nāth. 10

Pad 9

Chalu kare re, Mohan trupt thaine;
Dāntne khotre re, sali rupāni laine. 1
Mukhvās laine re, dholiye birāje;
Pujā kare re, harijan hete jhājhe. 2
Pāpan upar re, ānto lai Albelo;
Fento bāndhe re, chhogu meli Chhelo. 3
Varshā rutune re, Sharad rutune jāni;
Ghelā nadinā re, nirmal nir vakhāni. 4
Sant harijanne re, sāthe lai Ghanshyām;
Nhāvā padhāre re, Ghele Purankām. 5
Bahu jalkridā re, kartā jalmā nhāy;
Jalmā tāli re, daine kirtan gāy. 6
Nhāine bā're re, nisri vastra paheri;
Ghode besi re, gher āve Ranglaheri. 7
Pāvan jashne re, harijan gātā āve;
Jivan joine re, ānand ur na samāve. 8
Gadhpurvāsi re, joine jag ādhār;
Sufal kare chhe re, nenā vāramvār. 9
Āvi birāje re, osarie bahunāmi;
Dholiyā upar re, Premānandnā Swāmi. 10

Pad 10

Nij sevakne re, sukh devāne kāj;
Pote pragatyā re, Purushottam Mahārāj. 1
Faliyāmāhi re, sabhā kari virāje;
Puran shashi re, uduganmā jem chhāje. 2
Brahmras varsi re, trupt kare harijanne;
Podhe rātre re, jami Shyām shuddh annane. 3
Be āngaliyu re, tilak karyāni pere;
Bhāl vachche re, ubhi rākhi fere. 4
Sutā sutā re, mālā māgi laine;
Jamne hāthe re, nit ferve chitt daine. 5
Bhul na pade re, kedi evu nem;
Dharmakuvarni re, sahaj prakruti em. 6
Bhar nidrāmā re, podhyā hoye Munirāye;
Koi ajāne re, lagār adi jāye. 7
Tyāre fadki re, jāge sundar Shyām;
'Kon chhe?' puchhe re, sevakne Sukhdhām. 8
Evi lilā re, Harini anant apār;
Me to gāi re, kaik mati anusār. 9
Je koi prite re, shikhshe sunshe gāshe;
Premānandno re, Swāmi rāji thāshe. 10

Rag: Dhol

Orā āvo Shyām sanehi, sundar var joun vhālā;
Jatan karine jivan mārā, jivamāhi proun vhālā. 1
Chihna anupam angoangnā, surate sambhāru vhālā;
Nakhshikh nirkhi nautam mārā, urmā utāru vhālā. 2
Arun kamalsam jugal charanni, shobhā ati sāri vhālā;
Chintvan karvā ātur ati, man vrutti māri vhālā. 3
Pratham te chintvan karu, sundar sole chihna vhālā;
urdhvarekhā opi rahi, atishe navin vhālā. 4
Anguthā āngali vachethi, nisarine āvi vhālā;
Pānini be kore jotā, bhaktane man bhāvi vhālā. 5
Jugal charanmā kahu manohar, chihna tenā nām vhālā;
Shuddh mane kari sambhārtā, nāsh pāme kām vhālā. 6
Ashtakon ne urdhvarekhā, swastik jāmbu jav vhālā;
Vajra, ankush, ketu ne padma, jamne page nav vhālā. 7
Trikon, kalash ne gopad sundar, dhanush ne meen vhālā;
Ardhachandra ne vyom sāt chhe, dābe page chihna vhālā. 8
Jamnā pagnā anguthānā nakhmāhi chihna vhālā;
Te to nirkhe je koi bhakta, pritie pravin vhālā. 9
E ja anguthāne bā're til ek nautam dhāru vhālā;
Premānand kahe nirkhu prite, prān lai vāru vhālā. 10

Rag: Garbi

Pad 1

Have mārā vahālāne nahi re visāru re,
Shvās uchhvāse te nitya sambhāru re. 1
Padyu māre Sahajānandji shu pānu re,
Have hu to kem kari rākhish chhānu re. 2
Āvyu māre Harivar varvānu tānu re,
E var na male kharche nānu re. 3
E var bhāgya vinā nav bhāve re,
E sneh lagna vinā nav āve re. 4

Durijan man re māne tem kahejyo re,
Swāmi mārā hradayāni bhitar rahejyo re. 5
Have hu to puran padvine pāmi re,
Malyā mune Nishkulānandnā Swāmi re. 6

Pad 2

Have mārā vahālānā darshan sāru,
Harijan āve hajāre hajāru. 1
Dholiye birāje Sahajānand Swāmi,
Puran Purushottam antarjāmi. 2
Sabhāmadhye bethā muninā vrund,
Temā shobhe tāre vintyo jem chandra. 3
Durgapur khel rachyo ati bhāri,
Bhelā rame sādhu ane brahmachāri. 4
Tāli pade upadati ati sāri,
Dhunya thāy chaud lok thaki nyāri. 5
Pāghaladimā chhogaliyu ati shobhe,
Joi joi harijannā man lobhe. 6
Padhāryā vahālo sarve te sukhnā rāshi,
Sahajānand Akshardhāmnā vāsi. 7
Bhāngi māri janmojanamni khāmi,
Malyā mune Nishkulānandnā Swāmi. 8
(After singing these verses meditate for five minutes)

Rag: Bihag

Podhe Prabhu sakal munike Shyām;
Swāminārāyan divya murti, santanke vishrām...
Akshar par ānandghan Prabhu, kiyo hai bhupar thām;
Jehi milat jan tarat māyā, lahat Akshardhām...podhe 1
Shārad Shesh Mahesh mahāmuni, japat jehi gunnām;
Jās padraj shish dhari dhari, hot jan nishkām...podhe 2
Premke paryank par Prabhu karat sukh ārām;

Muktānand nij charan dhig gun, gāvat āthu jām...podhe 3

Rag: Garbi

Re Shyām tame sāchu nānu,
biju sarve dukhdāyak jānu...
Re tam vinā sukh sampat kahāve,
Te to sarve mahādukh upjāve;
Ante emā kām koi nāve...re Shyām 1
Re murakh lok mare bhatki,
Juthā sange hāre shir patki;
Tethi māri manvrutti atki...re Shyām 2
Re akhand alaukik sukh sāru,
Re joi joi man mohyu māru;
Dharā dhan tam upar vāru...re Shyām 3
Re Brahmāthi kit lagi joyu,
Juthu sukh jānine vagovyu;
Muktānand man tam sang mohyu...re Shyām 4

21. Niyams (Codes of Conduct)

Shriji Maharaj has laid down the codes of conduct for householder devotees and ascetics in his Shikshapatri, Dharmamrut and Nishkam Shuddhi. The rules which are prescribed should be steadfastly followed both in their letter and spirit. The ascetics must also practise those codes which are stated in the Dharmamrut and Nishkam Shuddhi. Even the great rishis and *devas* have come to grief by not observing the codes of conduct prescribed in the scriptures. Therefore, those who transgress the codes of conduct prescribed by the *brahmanized* Sadhu never become happy. Both ascetics and householders should do their duties. Those who follow these ethical principles over-zealously or show indifference towards them come to grief. Those who adhere to these principles firmly, attain all ascetic qualities and overcome worldly desires. One who transgresses the religious sanctions is not dear to Shriji Maharaj. Shriji Maharaj has said in Vachanamrut, "Only one who follows the commands of the Satpurush is behaving as the *atma*." One who acts according to the tenets of religion has a permanent place in Satsang. Therefore, one must adhere to the principles even at the cost of one's own life.

As stated in the Shikshapatri, Dharmamrut and Nishkam Shuddhi, ascetics have to observe the following five *vartmans*:

1. *Nishkam*
2. *Nirlobh*
3. *Nisswad*
4. *Nissneh*

5. *Nirman*

The householder devotees should abstain from drinking liquor, eating meat, theft, adultery and debasement of one's self and of others. Besides these five *vartmans*, they have to observe the following eleven basic rules of moral behaviour:

1. Never kill any living creature.
2. Never seek the company of others' wives.
3. Never eat meat.
4. Never drink liquor or take any intoxicants.
5. Never touch a widow.
6. Never commit suicide.
7. Never steal.
8. Never level false allegations on anyone.
9. Never vilify of slander any deities.
10. Never accept food or water from unworthy people.
11. Never listen to religious discourses from a person who has no faith in God.

Nishchay (Conviction)

Just as we remember, our name, community, town and other details and never forget them under any circumstances, in the same manner we must firmly believe that Bhagwan Swaminarayan is the supporter and beholder of innumerable cosmic worlds, sovereign of Akshardham, fountainhead of all incarnations, the divine cause of all causes and that Gunatitanand Swami is the manifest form of Akshar, the heavenly abode of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. To believe this firmly and wholeheartedly is called *nishchay* or conviction. God incarnates on this earth in human form to bestow upon people his divine grace and to convince them about his divinity. Although the manifest form of God resembles man in appearance and actions, to know him as divine, luminous and redemptive is called *nishchay*.

To see no distinction between God in human form and the God who dwells in Akshardham is called *nishchay*. When God himself is not physically manifest on this earth, realize him as ever-present on this earth in the form of the Param Ekantik Sadhu. To recognize such a God-realized Sadhu and to have divine faith in him is called *nishchay*.

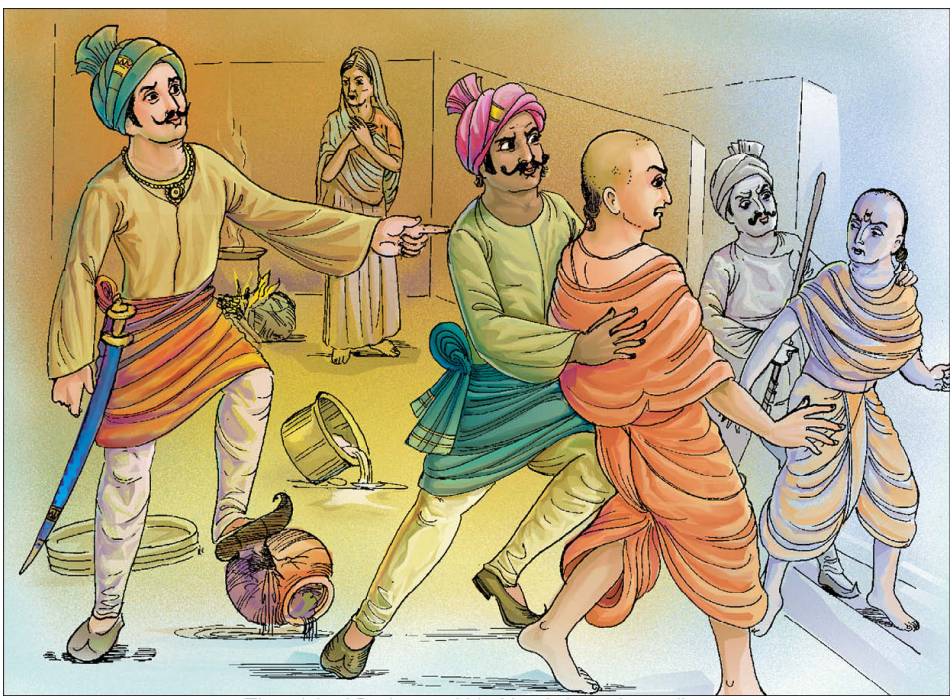
One who possesses such understanding develops the highest category of *nirvikalp nishchay*, and one who possesses such *nirvikalp nishchay* realizes that the millions of macrocosms, each encircled by the eight spheres, appear as small as atoms before the infinite greatness of Akshar, which is the divine abode of Purushottam Narayan. When one attains spiritual identity with Akshar, that is, becomes *aksharrup (brahmrup)* then one can worship Purushottam. To attain this state and worship like this is called *nirvikalp nishchay*.

Paksh

It is necessary for a staunch *satsangi* to remain steadfast, even at the cost of his life, to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his God-realized Sadhu, who is in constant communion

with Maharaj, and also unto his disciples. Shriji Maharaj has granted ultimate *moksha* to devotees who have taken the side of his devotees. Even if our life, prestige and self-respect are at stake, we should never leave the devotee in a lurch. By helping a devotee of God, we win God's favour and blessings. Just as we give support to our relatives without looking into their merits, we must ignore any flaws and shortcomings of the devotees, remembering only one thing, that they have reposed faith in God, and should continue to support them. This pleases God the most and he bestows upon us his choicest favours and divine bliss.

22. Two Kathi Devotees from Gundali



The wicked Darbar and his friends beat the sadhus

Two sadhus of the Swaminarayan faith had gone to collect alms on the outskirts of the village Gundali. It was almost noon and they hadn't received anything. Their bags were empty. Randebai, mother of the Kathis Meraman and Mamaiya, had been raised by her parents to live by the traditional *satsang* values. So when she saw the sadhus, she invited them through someone to her house. The sadhus were received with love and devotion and were offered grains to prepare *khichdi*. Randebai was having the darshan of the sadhus from a distance. Meraman and Mamaiya were away in their fields.

Soon the prince of the local Darbar and his companions arrived there. They were as naughty and impetuous as hooligans who go wild during Holi. When they saw the

sadhus cooking food, one of them gave a hard blow to one of the sadhus with his hilted staff and the other sadhu was pulled by his tuft and was flung into a corner. Randebai, who watching this tragic drama from a distance, shouted at them and pleaded, “Oh dear! Please do not beat our sadhus!” But no one would listen to her pleadings. The evil-minded youths turned the vessels upside down, threw away the food, shouted wildly and drove the sadhus out of the village. The youths were yelling, shouting and laughing all the way to the outskirts of the town. Poor Randebai watched all this helplessly and was sobbing.

At noon, Meraman and Mamaiya returned home for lunch. They saw their mother crying. They saw the cooking vessels lying in the street and some beads of the *kanthi* scattered there. Both the brothers approached their mother and asked, “Aai! What happened? Why are you crying?” Randebai lifted her head and said to her sons, “*Mama’s* (maternal uncle’s) sadhus were insulted, beaten and driven away.” The brother’s failed to understand their mother. They asked her to elaborate. “Aai! Tell us in detail. Who had come? What happened?”

Randebai wiped her eyes and narrated the ugly incident in detail. As the brothers were listening to their mother, their warrior blood began to boil. They were very angry, drew their swords and said, “Aai, now we will not take any food till we cut off their heads.”

The Kathi brothers attack the Darbar and his friends

Then Mamaiya suggested, “Before we take any action let us send Aai away to Gadhada, since the Darbar shall certainly take revenge.” Meraman agreed to his brother’s suggestion. They loaded the cart with all their belongings and set their

mother on the road to Gadhada. On the outskirts of village the brothers alerted their mother and said, “Aai, if we survive we will meet you in the presence of Maharaj at Gadhada. If not, we will meet you in Dham.” Aai also wished them well and bid ‘Jai Swaminarayan’ for the last time and saw them off to avenge the insult of her beloved sadhus.

On reaching home the brothers took a bath, and rode on their horses to the *darbar,* readied their swords and challenged, “Who has beaten our maternal uncle’s sadhus?”

This disturbed the royal party. The youngsters were stunned to see the brothers’ wrath. But the prince teasingly asked, “Are you talking about the *mundias* of Swaminarayan?” The brothers replied, “Yes, yes, who beat our *mama’s* sadhus?”

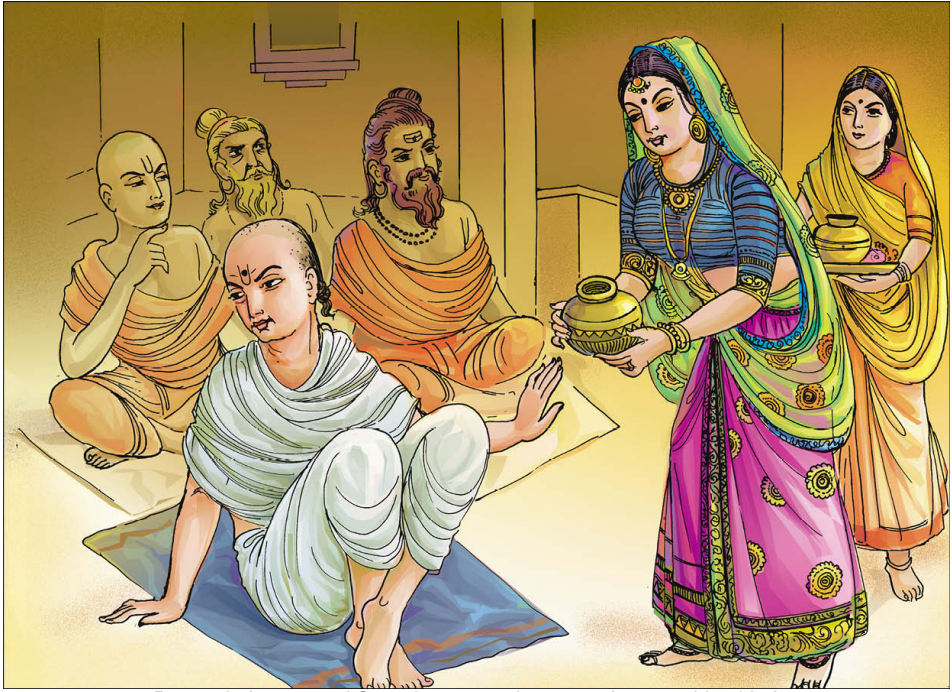
The proud prince beat his chest and replied, “I beat them.”

The Kathi brother, whose dagger was quivering like the tongue of a cobra, instantly attacked the prince with his dagger, saying, “Now get ready for death!” The prince collapsed then and there. There was commotion in the entire gathering. When some of them tried to overpower the brothers, another member of the group was beheaded with the sword. There were shouts all around, “Chase them, catch them, kill them.” But the brothers rode off with lightning speed from the scene.

After killing the prince, the brothers went to the Darbar’s farm and destroyed the standing crop with their swords. When they were cutting crop, they saw the Darbar’s men approaching. The brothers’ swords had become blunt because of the crop cutting, yet they offered a tough fight before they laid down their lives in the holy cause. Thus, they avenged the insult to their *mama’s* sadhus.

When Maharaj learnt about this at Gadhada, he observed, “Those who died so valiantly for the cause of my sadhus are great. If those who die on the battlefield can attain heaven, then these two brothers have died for my sake, so they shall attain Akshardham. They will be granted *moksha* like that of Muktanand Swami.” Thus, Shriji Maharaj granted these two brothers a place in Akshardham because they had avenged the insult to their *mama’s* sadhus. Such is the golden fruit of *paksh.*

23. Paramchaitanyanand Swami



Paramchaitanyanand Swami prevents the queen from washing his feet

Paramchaitanyanand Swami had been initiated into the sadhu-fold by Ramanand Swami. Thereafter, he had continued his studies and had become a great scholar. Shriji Maharaj had appointed him as a *sadguru* and he was made the head of fifty sadhus. Even the devotees showed great reverence towards him. Any devotee who wanted to offer anything to Shriji Maharaj, first went to Paramchaitanyanand Swami and then only could they see Maharaj.

Once, a Kshatriya devotee from the village Moda came to Vartal to become an ascetic. But Shriji Maharaj commanded him, "Go to Bochasan and plough the field of Kashidas." In accordance with Shriji Maharaj's command, he tilled Kashidas's field for three years. Then he returned to Shriji Maharaj for initiation. Shriji Maharaj was greatly pleased with his devotion, so he initiated him and named him Aksharanand Swami. Then Aksharanand Swami was made the *mahant* of the Vartal mandir.

Paramchaitanyanand Swami felt offended because he was very senior to Aksharanand Swami and yet the junior sadhu had been appointed as *mahant*. He thought, "Only yesterday he was made a sadhu and today he is made *mahant*." Feeling offended Paramchaitanyanand Swami left. When his disciples saw him going away, they too followed suit. The Swami asked them, "Why are you all following me?"

The fifty disciples replied, "We want to be with our guru."

The Swami replied, "I am leaving this place because I have been offended. But I still worship Shriji Maharaj. He is God. He alone can bestow emancipation. Therefore, all of you should return and keep firm faith in him and worship him forever."

All the fifty sadhus returned. When Shriji Maharaj learnt about this episode, he

observed, “The one who has gone away is our devotee and those who have returned are ignorant. Paramchaitanyanand Swami continues to love me and worship me. Although he is away, he is very much in the Satsang.”

In the course of his travels, Paramchaitanyanand Swami arrived at Dharampur. At that time the queen of Dharampur, Queen Kushalkuverba was listening to religious discourses from a Brahmin. At the end of the discourses, she used to wash the feet of the sadhus and drank that water as *prasad.* While performing such adoration she came to the spot where Paramchaitanyanand Swami was standing. When she bent down to wash his feet, he moved away from her. Soon Kushalkuvarba realized that he was a sadhu who would not touch wealth and women. She experienced great bliss in her heart.

After this incident, Kushalkuvarba made her prince perform *pujan* of Swami, and would listen to his religious talks from behind a curtain. She heard about the infinite divine glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan from Swami and was attracted towards Satsang. She became a devotee of Swaminarayan and began to worship him. At times she arranged for the Swami to be on an elephant through the streets of the town. She had such great respect for the sadhus of Maharaj.

Shriji Maharaj heard about this at Gadhpur. He called Muktanand Swami and said, “If an elephant is stuck it can be pulled out only by another elephant. Paramchaitanyanand Swami will return through you, so go to Dharampur.” With this command from Shriji Maharaj Muktanand Swami went to Dharampur. At that time Paramchaitanyanand Swami was passing through the streets of Dharampur on an elephant. As soon as he saw Muktanand Swami he got down and fell at his feet and offered his obeisance and inquired, “What is Maharaj’s command for me?” Muktanand Swami replied, “Maharaj has called you.” He immediately set out for Gadhada and asked Muktanand Swami to stay behind at Dharampur. Before he left for Gadhpur he said, “The queen is a true spiritual aspirant. So, you stay here and conduct religious discourses.” Then he came to Gadhada and met Shriji Maharaj.

Paramchaitanyanand Swami was very inquisitive and intelligent. He did not fully accept the talks about Maharaj’s supremacy. Whenever Gopalanand Swami talked about Shriji Maharaj’s supremacy, Paramchaitanyanand Swami used to say, “Boy! Don’t try to evaluate God.”

Once, Raghuvirji Maharaj had arrived in Gadhada for the Jal Jhilani festival. The congregation went to the River Ghela to bathe Thakorji. Somehow they forgot to invite Paramchaitanyanand Swami. Paramchaitanyanand Swami observed, “Nobody remembers me.” Balmukundanand Swami, a disciple of Gopalanand Swami, who was serving Paramchaitanyanand Swami remarked, “Have we become *satsangis* to care about honour and respect?”

Paramchaitanyanand Swami’s conscience was stirred by this remark. He said to the sadhu, “Who did you get this wisdom from?” The sadhu replied, “From my guru, Gopalanand Swami.” Then Paramchaitanyanand Swami’s said to him, “Please send Gopalanand Swami to me tomorrow.”

The next day Gopalanand Swami went to the seat of Paramchaitanyanand Swami.

He was seated on a cot, while Gopalanand Swami sat on a straw mat. Gopalanand Swami talked a great deal about *satsang* and the supremacy of Maharaj. Paramchaitanyanand Swami felt greatly relieved and was impressed. He experienced divine peace and bliss in his heart. He said to Gopalanand Swami, "Do come again tomorrow."

The next day when Gopalanand Swami went to see him, the cot had been removed and both of them sat on cushions facing each other. Paramchaitanyanand Swami was greatly impressed by the talks of Gopalanand Swami. He invited him on the third day also. But this time he made Gopalanand Swami sit on the cot and he sat on the floor. He felt divine bliss in his heart to hear Gopalanand Swami. He prostrated on the ground before Gopalanand Swami and confessed, "I have been a guru for twelve years and a *sadguru* for twelve years, but only today have I become a true *satsangi*." Had he not met Balmukundanand Swami and Gopalanand Swami, he would have remained spiritually incomplete. He frequently used to pray, "O Maharaj! Please lead us to your true sadhus."

By coming into contact with Gopalanand Swami Paramchaitanyanand Swami became humble and became a true sadhu.

24. Kirtan

Rudā lāgo chho rājendra mandir māre āvtā re...
Jarkasiyo jāmo Hari paheri,
Māthe bāndhi pāgh soneri;
Gudho rento odhi man lalchāvtā re...rudā 1
Haide hār gulābi fore,
Chitt māru roki rākhyu tore;
Gajrā kāju bāju man māre bhāvtā re...rudā 2
Kanak chhadi sundar kar laine,
Gajgati chālo halvā rahine;
Chittdu choro mithu mithu gāvtā re...rudā 3
Premānand nā Nāth vihāri,
Jāu tārā vadankamal par vāri;
Hete shu bolāvi tāp shamāvtā re...rudā 4

25. Gunatitanand Swami's Discourses

1. *Swaminarayan Hare Swamie vāt kari je: "Kalyānno khap kevo rākhvo joie? Je agnoterā kālmā Bhimnāthnā rānkā māgvā āvtā ne kargartā ne tene dhakka māre to pan jāy nahi, evo khap rākhvo joie."*

What sort of intense desire for *moksha* should one have? It should be like the

paupers who came to Bhimnath mandir (in Saurashtra, Gujarat) during the famine of 1879 (1823 CE) to beg for food. They would plead for food and were pushed around, yet they did not go away. This is the type of intense desire one should have for *moksha* (2.95).

Sadguru Gunatitanand Swami has compared the craving for *moksha* with that of the helpless hungry people of Bhimnath. During the famine of Samvat 1869 (1813 CE), at Bhimnath Mahadev near Dhandhuka, people were offered a ladleful of porridge made from husk. People used to stand there in a queue for hours just for this. At times when there was a big rush towards those who were serving this food the people were pushed away and some of them would fall into the sandy bed of the River Nilka. But, they would get up and stand in the queue once again because they knew that it was the only place where a ladleful of porridge was available. One must have such intense craving and hunger for *moksha*.

Shriji Maharaj used to narrate a story: There lived a *sadguru* in a certain forest. Everyday he received five hundred grams of rice from the town. The *sadguru* depended on this rice. A seeker came to him to be his disciple. The *sadguru* said to this seeker, "Look here, I get just 500 grams of rice daily for myself. I cook it and eat it. There is nothing else in this place."

The seeker replied, "Guruji, don't worry about me, I can live by drinking the water in which you cook your rice." Hearing this, the guru allowed him to stay there and serve him.

After some time another seeker came to the guru and expressed his desire to be his disciple. The guru told him how he and his disciple were living with just a little rice. At that time the new seeker asked, "What does your disciple do?"

Guru said, "He drinks the water in which the rice is cooked."

So this aspirant said, "Guruji, don't worry, I will wash out the vessel in which the rice has been cooked and will take that water."

The guru saw his firmness and allowed him to stay with him.

Then there came a third seeker. He too wanted to stay with the guru. The guru explained to him how he and his two pupils maintained themselves. The third seeker replied "Guruji, I will drink the water from your plate after you have eaten and washed your hands, and serve you."

Guru was pleased to see firmness of this disciple and allowed him to stay with him as well.

Thus, the three seekers were living like this with their *guru*.

After some days a fourth disciple came to seek communion with the guru. The guru told him, "I cannot give you anything to eat because the water in which I boil the rice is taken by one of the pupils, the water in which I wash the rice is taken by another and the third pupil is drinking the water remaining in my plate after I have eaten."

The seeker replied, "I will eat the rice fragments that fall on the floor when you clean the rice." The guru realized that he was very sincere and granted him permission to stay with him.

Thus, the disciples had realized the greatness of their guru and they were sincerely

craving for *moksha*. Therefore, they showed willingness to drink the meagre rice water and seek communion with the guru. Thus, one who is eager to have redemption like these pupils, flourishes in Satsang day by day.

2. *Swaminarayan Hare Swamie vāt kari je: "Hiro koi rite fute nahi pan mākadnā lohithi fute tem vāsanā koi rite tale nahi pan motā purush kahe tem kare, teno gun āve ne kriyā game to vāsanā tale nikar sādhan to Saubhari ādiknā kevā? Pan vāsanā tale nahi."*

It is said that a diamond cannot be cut in any way, except by using *mākadnu lohi*. Similarly, desires cannot be destroyed in any way except by doing what the great (Sadhu) instructs, imbibing his virtues and admiring his actions. Otherwise, what remains to be said about the endeavours of Saubhari and others? Still their desires were not overcome (1.28).

Vasana means desire, craving and it cannot be so easily controlled. Gunatitanand Swami says that *vasana* cannot be overcome merely by one's own effort or even by performing austerities.

A Nagar Brahmin lived in Junagadh. He had a great weakness for tasty food. Everyday he would eat different delicacies. He had a cook, but if the food was not up to his taste the Brahmin would grow wild and throw the plate on the floor and start abusing all the members of his family. They were all fed up with his craze for food and never felt at ease till he had finished his meals.

This Nagar devotee regularly went to the mandir but never listened to the religious discourses. He would offer his obeisance from a distance and then return home. His mother was so fed up with his temper that she conveyed her problem to Gunatitanand Swami through a devotee.

Next morning when that Nagar devotee was returning after darshan, Gunatitanand Swami called him and asked him to stay to listen to the discourses. At the end of the discourse Swami got up for lunch. This devotee thought, "What does Swami eat?" So, out of curiosity, he went to the kitchen to find out what Swami eats. He thought that being a *mahant* of such a big mandir, he must be eating very rich and delicious dishes and sweets.

He was watching Swami from a distance. Balmukund Swami served *rotla* crumbs in Swami's bowl and poured some buttermilk. The devotee thought that it must be *dudhpak* (thickened sweet milk). Gunatitanand Swami intuitively read his mind and poured some water from his *tumbdi* and started eating.

This disillusioned the devotee completely. He approached Swami, fell at his feet and asked, "What are you eating Swami?" Swami replied, "I am eating *khurma* and buttermilk."

The Nagar devotee was taken aback, "Oh! The *mahant* of such a big mandir is eating just *rotla* and buttermilk? The Swami is above tastes." He was greatly influenced by Swami's simplicity and his conscience underwent a great transformation.

He was a little late for his meals. Everyone was worried that he would be in a bad mood. But to their surprise, he quietly ate whatever was served in his dish. He had overcome his weakness for taste and had become a true *satsangi*!

Therefore, Shriji Maharaj has said that even if one is as lustful as a dog, but believes the sadhu to be lust-free one also becomes lust-free. By believing the sadhu to be pure, we too become pure. By imbibing the virtues of the God-realized Sadhu, we can overcome our *vasana*. Saubhari and other rishis became emaciated through severe austerities, but they failed to burn their *vasana*. Therefore, communion with the Satpurush (God-realized Sadhu) is better than austerities in our endeavour to free ourselves from the clutches of *vasana*.

3. *Swaminarayan Hare Swamie vāt kari je: "Apne tapās karvo je hajār rupiyā male tenu shu fal chhe, lākh rupiyā male tenu shu fal chhe ne karod rupiyā male tenu shu fal chhe? Kem je rotlāthi to vadhāre khavātu nathi. Māte tapās karvo ne pāchha valta shikhu."*

We should think, "What is the benefit of getting 1,000 rupees or 100,000 rupees or 10 million rupees? Since we cannot eat more than a limited amount of food. Think thus and learn to step back from indulgence" (1.34).

Swami explains to us that however much money one earns, one should continually try to find out what benefit the money brings us. Because after death, absolutely nothing will accompany us.

Vaghjibhai of Vaso was a staunch disciple of Gunatitanand Swami. He perpetually felt divine bliss in his heart. His father, Tulsibhai, was a big dealer in tobacco, so he could not find time to visit Junagadh. He invited Swami to Vaso. He used to say, "Swami, please stay here for four days instead of two, if need be, stay for eight days instead of four but see to it that I experience the peace and bliss which my son Vaghji experiences in his heart." But Tulsibhai never found time to sit in the company of Swami. After his morning darshan he would go to the shop and return late in the evening. He was so engrossed in his business that he could never spend even a little time with Swami.

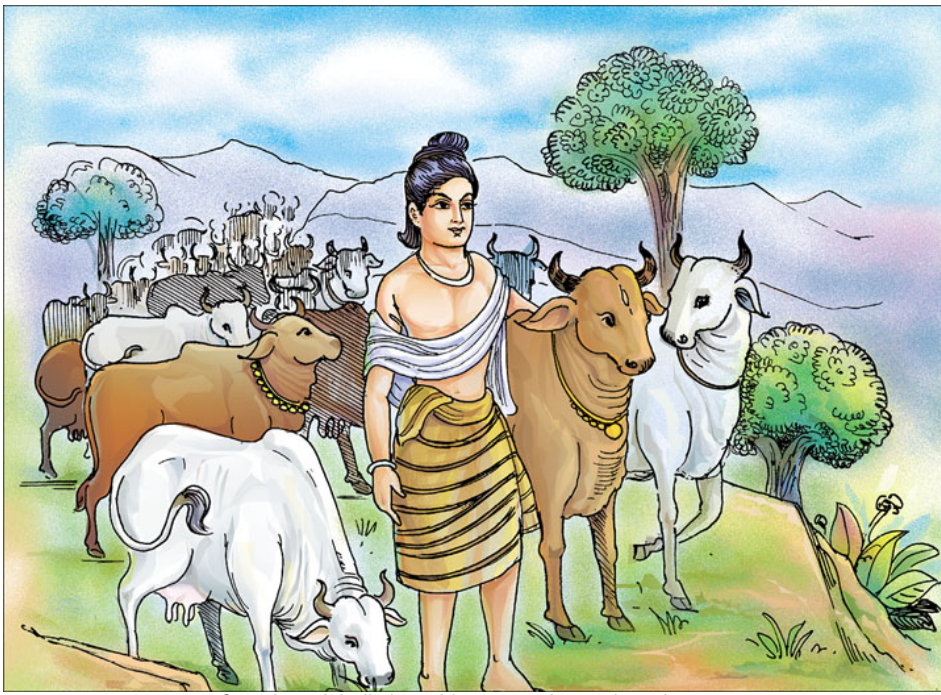
Three days passed, but Tulsibhai could not take benefit from either Swami's company or from his religious discourses. And yet he went on pleading. "Give me peace, give me bliss." On the fourth day, Swami called him and asked him to sit by his side and said, "Tell me, if a thick heavy pan weighing a 100,000 *maunds* is heated red hot and then if one pours one or two pots of water on it will it cool down?"

Tulsibhai replied, "No Swami."

Then Swami said, "Such a pan when dipped into the water of Ganga will cause waters to leap as high as a tall mansion for at least fifteen days as it coolsing down. In the same manner, your consciousness has been heated by your involvement in worldly activities for so many years. How can you feel peace or experience bliss by just two drops of darshan or spiritual talks. Even by spending thousands of rupees one cannot eradicate the darkness of ignorance from one's conscience. It is removed only by seeking communion with such sadhus." Thus, Swami encouraged him a great deal. Then Tulsibhai started visiting Junagadh to seek communion with Swami. As a result, he felt peace in his heart. Therefore, after seeking communion with a sadhu, if one learns to withdraw from the worldly chase then only does one experience peace and bliss in one's heart.

4. *Swaminarayan Hare Swamie vāt kari je: "Jem gāy chhe te vāchhdā sāru pārso muke chhe tem je shishya hoy te gurune man sope to antahkarannu ajnān tāli nākhe. Pan te vinā tale nahi."*

Just as a cow releases milk for its calf, if a devotee surrenders his mind to his guru, he will free the inner faculties of ignorance. But without this it will not be removed (2.4).



Satyakam Jabali obeys his guru and attends to the cows

Satyakam Jabali went to a guru to attain wisdom. The guru asked him to tell him about his family background and history. He replied, "I don't know," and went to his mother to learn about his family background. But his mother told him, "You have no father." Jabali returned to the hermitage of the guru and told him everything. The guru then remarked, "You haven't concealed anything from me so you are a Brahmin." He granted him permission to study in his hermitage. Once, the guru said, "Who will lead these cows to the meadows? He will have to allow them to graze till they increase to four hundred cows. Then only I will impart spiritual wisdom to him."

Most of the pupils replied, "We have come here to study and not to graze cows." They avoided the work. But Satyakam Jabali carried out the guru's command and led the cows away for grazing.

In accordance with the guru's command, he started serving the cows and took them out for grazing everyday. He looked after their daily needs of water and fodder and served them with love. The cows went on multiplying. While serving the cows, he began to learn a great deal from the trees, leaves, animals and birds. When the number of cows had reached four hundred Satyakam went to his guru. At that time his face was beaming with the radiance of wisdom.

The guru bestowed upon him his choicest blessings and said, “You have acquired all knowledge. From today, you will be regarded as a master of everything.” With these words the guru blessed him and he attained *brahmajnan*.

Thus, Swami observed, such stories can be narrated only when one begins to overflow with love for one’s disciples. Milk begins to flow from the udder of a cow at the sight of her calf, because the calf is so dear to the cow; in the same manner if one surrenders completely to the guru and accepts his precepts unconditionally, then only does the guru eradicate one’s ignorance. One who has become worthy of one’s guru’s blessings and love does not need any knowledge of the scriptures.

5. *Swaminarayan Hare Swamie vāt kari je: “Vishayne mārge āndhalā thavu, bahera thavu, lulā thavu pan āsakta na thavu.”*

On the path of sense pleasures, become blind, deaf and lame, but do not become attached to them (2.116).

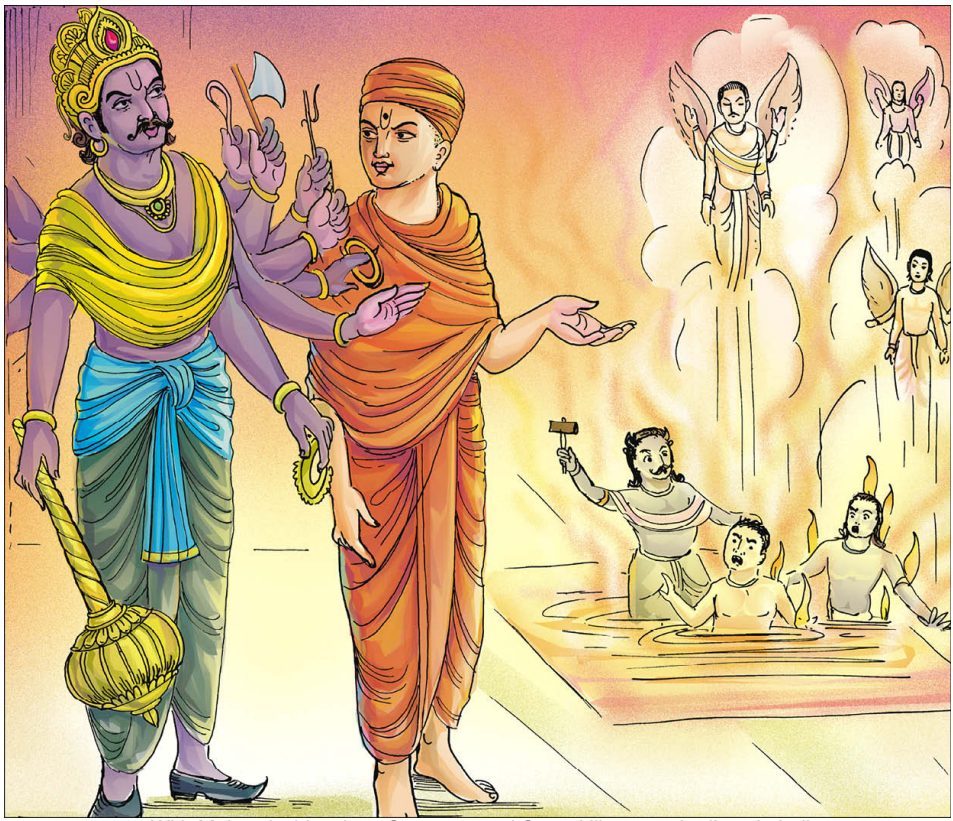
Swami says that desire for worldly pleasures is at the root of all our miseries. The *panchvishays* have taken possession of our *jiva* since eternity, namely, speech, touch, smell, beauty and taste. Each one lures the *jiva* towards it and kills it.

1. *Shabda* (sound/speech): A hunter attracts the deer by playing a flute. When the deer becomes absorbed in the music and stands still, the hunter shoots an arrow and kills it.
2. *Sparsh* (touch): In order to catch an elephant a pit is dug and covered with leaves and branches. Then a fake she-elephant is placed on the other side of the pit. The lustful elephant with a desire for contact with the mate tries to run across the pit and falls into it and gets caught.
3. *Roop* (beauty): The moth is attracted by the light of the lamp and gets burnt in its flame and dies.
4. *Ras* (taste): The fisherman keeps a bait on the hook of the fishing line. The fish approaches it to eat the bait and is caught.
5. *Gandh* (smell): The wasp can bite through the toughest of wood. But the same wasp is attracted by the sweet smell of the lotus flower and refuses to leave its soft cushion. It has so much attraction for the lotus that it does not realize that the flower closes its petals and makes it a prisoner. Then an elephant comes and plucks the flower and crushes it under its heavy foot. The poor wasp dies. Thus, each of these *vishays* causes the death of different animals and insects who have an attachment and craving towards them. Then how can we human beings who are drawn to all these five *vishays* escape from their clutches? They certainly keep us in their bondage.

Therefore, Swami asks us to be blind and deaf and indifferent towards the *panchvishays*. In other words, we must completely withdraw all our senses from these *panchvishays*. If we are lured by beauty we must withdraw our eyes from it, withdraw the ears from worldly sounds and speech, withdraw the tongue from the tastes and all our senses from their sources of joy. To covet somebody else’s beauty with our eyes is a sin and to think of possessing something which is not ours is a sin. Thus, when one

remains alert in matters of one's senses and attains complete control over them, then only does one become *brahmanized* and qualified to attain Purushottam.

26. Swarupanand Swami



With Maharaj's blessings Swarupanand Swami liberates the jivas in hell

There was an influential sadhu from north India in Shriji Maharaj's group of sadhus. When this sadhu heard that a *jivanmukta* has manifested in the western region of the country, he experienced infinite peace in his heart. He came to Gujarat, met Shriji Maharaj and received initiation from him and came to be known as Swarupanand Swami.

At Mangrol, Maharaj granted samadhi to Swarupanand Swami. He went to Akshardham and saw Maharaj seated on the divine throne, surrounded by an infinite number of liberated souls. When he saw the divine power of Shriji Maharaj in samadhi, he was convinced, "Maharaj is the greatest of all incarnations, the cause of all incarnations, Purna Purushottam Narayan himself."

After realizing this knowledge of the supreme nature of Maharaj, Swarupanand Swami was completely transformed. He had risen beyond the needs of the body, and developed *atmanishtha* and detachment towards material pleasures. During his illness

when Maharaj asked, “Do you suffer much?”

Swarupanand Swami replied, “The horse is weak but the rider is fit (i.e. the body is suffering but the soul is powerful).” Such was his *atmanishtha*. He never cared for his body because he was always above body-consciousness.

Once, Swarupanand Swami returned from a *satsang* tour of the villages. Shriji Maharaj asked, “What type of people did you find in the villages?” Swami replied, “I have seen people only seated under the neem tree. There are no people anywhere else.” The sadhus who were present there failed to understand the significance of his words, so they asked, “If you didn’t see anybody then to whom did you preach to?” But Maharaj replied “Others help people attain *moksha* by making them observe *niyams* and *vartmans* while the mere darshan of Swarupanand Swami helps them attain *moksha*.”

Once Swarupanand Swami asked Maharaj, “What is the *moksha* attained by the *satsangi* like?”

Shriji Maharaj replied, “The *moksha* attained by the *satsangis* is as great as the one attained by the avatars.”

Swarupanand Swami then observed, “Guru Saheb! Then that is really a great *moksha*.” Such was his firm belief in the supremacy of Maharaj that he never hesitated to talk about his supremacy before him.

Once, Shriji Maharaj said to Swarupanand Swami, “When a new king ascends to the throne, all the prisoners are released. In the same manner I want to grant *moksha* to the innumerable *jivas* who are suffering in hell. Go and redeem those who are in hell.”

As commanded by Shriji Maharaj, Swarupanand Swami entered into samadhi and went to Dharma Raja. Dharma Raja praised him a great deal and offered him his throne. Then Swarupanand Swami said to Dharma Raja, “Show me the pits of hell.”

While passing through the different parts of hell they arrived at Kumbhipak Narak. Swarupanand Swami was moved by the cries of *jivas* in agony there. He started chanting, “Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan”. The Swaminarayan mantra transformed the *jivas* and they attained divine bodies with four hands and went to the realm of Bhumapurush.

Shriji Maharaj had sent sadhus to different parts of the country to spread *satsang*. Swarupanand Swami had gone as far as Jagannathpuri talking to many people about *satsang*. At Jagannathpuri, he saw a Brahmin crying by the dead body of his only son. The son was virtuous. Swarupanand Swami, out of sheer pity, approached the Brahmin and said, “Why are you crying so bitterly? Is your son really dead?” With these words, he remembered Shriji Maharaj and revived the Brahmin’s son. The Brahmin was wonderstruck. He talked to the king about this incident but by that time Swarupanand Swami had already left the place.

Swarupanand Swami remained in continuous communion with the *murti* of Maharaj. He was above the three bodies and three states, but when he fell ill he was feeling restless. So Shriji Maharaj said to him, “Go to Parvatbhai. You will experience peace.” Swarupanand Swami went to Agatrai, stayed with Parvatbhai for two days and talked to him, but he did not feel at peace so he returned to Gadhpur.

Shriji Maharaj said to him, “I had not sent you to Parvatbhai to discourse to him but

to listen to him." So, he returned to Agatrai and in all humility requested Parvatbhai to talk to him. Parvatbhai said to him, "Concentrate on the roof tiles of Dada Khachar." Swarupanand Swami realized his mistake that although he was in perpetual communion with the *murti* he did not have the intense craving for the darshan and contact of the manifest form of Shriji Maharaj. Even if one sees the *murti* of God incessantly, to worship him in all the nine ways and to sing the praises of all his divine exploits is the fruit of one's spiritual wisdom and the state of being in constant communion with the *murti*. When Swarupanand Swami realized this, he experienced divine bliss and inner peace.

27. Dharma

In his Shikshapatri Shriji Maharaj defines dharma: "That noble, ethical or moral conduct which has been established by Shrutis and Smrutis is dharma." In the Shrutis and Smrutis we find both *vidhi* and *nishedh* – do's and don'ts – governing the behaviour of man. By adhering to these do's and don'ts and following the rules of one's stage of life, a man not only earns name, fame, prosperity and pleasures while he is alive but attains Devlok after his death. However, he does not attain ultimate *moksha* and does not free himself from the cycle of births and deaths. When his merits are exhausted he has to come back to the earth from the Devlok.

So, what is the nature of the dharma which grants ultimate *moksha*? A special description of such dharma is given in the Vachanamrut. *Sadachar* means dharma, *sat* means Parabrahman, *sat* also means Brahman. To follow Brahman and Parabrahman in our daily life is *sadachar* and this is known as dharma. To follow the manifest *brahmanized* sadhu who has all the divine qualities of Parabrahman Paramatma, and who himself is the representative of God on earth is also dharma. By following such a Sadhu in our thoughts and actions we attain *moksha*. Such a Sadhu leads his life in accordance with the code of conduct laid down in the Shikshapatri and also honours the commands of Shriji Maharaj. Therefore, we too, should obey the rules prescribed for us in the Shikshapatri. By so doing, all improper thoughts disappear from our mind and we begin to tread on the path of dharma.

Jnan (Spiritual Wisdom)

Jnan means knowledge. It is to understand properly the forms of *jiva*, *ishwar*, *maya*, Brahman and Parabrahman. To distinguish between body and *atma* is the basis of *jnan*. The attributes of the body and *atma* are different. The body is inanimate, perishable, and a source of misery. *Atma* (soul) is animate and luminous, true and immortal. Never ascribe the attributes of the body to the soul and vice-versa. When one recognizes the *atma* as independent of the body then only can one rise above joys and sorrows, thirst and hunger, insult and honour which are the attributes of the body. This is the primary qualification of one who is spiritually wise.

Besides this, it is essential to properly understand the five eternal realities – *jiva*, *ishwar*, *maya*, Brahman and Parabrahman.

Jiva is one that knows little, is as small as an atom, is luminous and animate and permeates all over the body.

Ishwar is omniscient, luminous and great. *Ishwar* is encircled by *maya*. There are infinite *ishwars*.

Maya is ego, *maya* is motionless, *maya* is composed of all the three *gunas* – goodness, passion and ignorance. It is in the form of darkness and is described as one which obstructs the mind engaged in the worship of God.

Aksharbrahman or Brahman is unchanging and steadfast. Aksharbrahman is one and unique. This Aksharbrahman has a form and is always in the service of Lord Purushottam-Narayan. Aksharbrahman in the form of Akshardham (the divine abode) is exquisitely brilliant and luminous, and supports, sustains and inspires *jivas*, *ishwars* and *maya*. In that all-pervading Akshardham, Lord Purushottam dwells with his infinite liberated souls.

Parabrahman Purushottam is the controller and sustainer of *jivas*, *ishwars* and *maya*. He is flawless and possesses infinite redemptive attributes. To know Shriji Maharaj as the cause of all the avatars and to know him as the supreme divinity is *jnan* (knowledge). To know one's own *atma* as something that is beyond the three bodies, three states and to know it as *brahmarup* and worship Purushottam Narayan is the fruit of *jnan*.

Vairagya (Detachment)

Not to have attachment or love for anything except God is called *vairagya*. If one is not attracted to the pleasures which exist between the earth and the realm of Prakruti-Purush, then one has *vairagya*. When we begin to find faults with our own body, our relations and also with all objects of sense gratification we easily develop some sort of aversion towards them. When this detachment becomes a conviction, it is called *vairagya*. When we realize that this body and this world are perishable and painful and when we don't develop any attachment towards them, *vairagya* is said to be born. *Vairagya* enables one to withdraw from all kinds of attachment and join unto God with deep devotion and love. *Vairagya* is one of the vital means to attain ultimate redemption.

Bhakti (Devotion)

Shriji Maharaj is an inexhaustible treasure of infinite redemptive attributes and to love his eternally powerful form with glory, grandeur and *jnan* is called devotion. According to the Shrimad Bhagvat there are nine types of devotion:

Shravanam kirtanam Vishno, smaranam pādsevanam;
Archanam vandanam sakayam dāsyam-ātmanivedanam.

To listen to religious discourses, to sing devotional songs, to remember God, to serve the lotus feet of God, to apply scented powders and sandalwood paste, to offer prostrations to God, to love him like a friend, to serve God with servitude and to

surrender one's self completely to him – these are the nine modes of worship.

The Swaminarayan Sampraday is a Bhakti tradition. Bhakti can be practised by anybody very easily. It is difficult to practise spiritual means such as *jnan*, *vairagya*, austerities, yoga, *yagna,* and the like in our times. If we sow a mango plant, then it grows into a tree and gives shade, wood, etc. But it cannot be called perfect till it begins to give its fruits. In the same manner all the attributes become meaningless in the absence of bhakti, because there is no *moksha* without devotion. Shriji Maharaj dwells with all his divine glory in Akshardham. The same God, of his own divine will, descended on this earth in a human form along with his *parshads, muktas* and total divinity.

To understand properly the significance of his form, and to see divinity in his human form and worship that form in all the nine modes of devotion with love is called bhakti. Moreover, to worship with love his *brahmanized* Sadhu who is in constant communion with him and moves on this earth in the human form is also called bhakti. Such bhakti earns *moksha*.

28. Subhashit (Wise Sayings)

Āhārnidrābhayamaithunam cha,
Sāmānyametat pashubhirnarānām;
Dharmo hi teshāmdhiko vishesho
dharmena hināh pashubhi samānāhā. 1

Hunger, sleep, fear and sex are the instincts of animals and man. Dharma is an additional feature of man. Therefore, a man without dharma is just like an animal.

Anyakshetre krutam pāpam tirtha kshetre vinashyati;
Tirthakshetre krutam pāpam vajralepo bhavishyati. 2

Sin committed at other places can be washed off at a place of pilgrimage; but one which is committed at a holy place becomes engrained in metal.

Shriji Maharaj says that sins committed at other places can be atoned for by company of the Sadhu, but those sins against the Sadhu become engrained and cannot be atoned for without the mercy of the Sadhu. No other spiritual means can help one to become oneself absolved (Skand Puran).

Yasyātmabuddhihi kunape tridhātuke
swadhihi kalatrādishu bhauma ijyadhihi;
Yattirthabuddhi salile na
karhichijaneshvabhigneshu sa eva gokharah. 3

He who looks upon this contemptuous body consisting of the three elements of wind, bile and phlegm as the self; those related to the body as one's own; and *murtis* of clay, stone or wood as objects of worship; and who regards sacred waters as pilgrim places and does not have such feelings towards the God-realized Sadhu is an animal in

human form.

- Shrimad Bhagvat 10-84-13

Dhyāyato vishyānpunsaha sangasteshupajāyate;
Sangātsanjāyate kāmah kāmāt krodhobhijāyate. 4
Krodhād bhavati sammoha, sammohāt-smrutivibhramaha;
Smrutibhranshād buddhināsho buddhināshātpranashyati. 5

If a man thinks of objects of sense gratification, interest in them arises; from such interest desire is born; that state in which a person cannot resist indulging in worldly pleasures is called desire; from desire anger is produced. From anger arises delusion – the loss of discrimination regarding what is and is not appropriate to do. Therefore, sins are committed. From delusion confusion of the mind develops. From confusion of the mind loss of *buddhi,* that is, one's efforts to attain *atmagnan* are lost. As a result of the loss of *buddhi,* one perishes.

- Bhagvad Gita 2:62-63

Nirmānmohā jitasangadoshā
adhyātmanityā vinivruttakāmāhā;
Dvandvairvimuktāhā sukhadukha
sangairgachchhantyamudhāhā padamavyayam tat. 6

Those who are free from vanity and ignorance, who have conquered the fault of being attached; who are continually engrossed in contemplation of the *atma;* who are desireless and liberated from the pairs of opposites like misery and happiness, etc. reach the eternal abode – Akshardham.

Dharmo gneya sadāchāra Shruti Smrutyupapāditaha;
Māhātmyagnānyugbhuri sneho bhaktishcha Mādhave. 7

Dharma is the code of moral conduct prescribed by the Shrutis and Smrutis. Deep devotion and love for God, with complete knowledge of his glory is called bhakti.

Vairāgyam gneyamapritihi Shri Krishnetarvarastushu;
Jnānam cha jivamāyesharupānām sushthu Vedanam. 8

Non-attachment to any object except to God is called *vairagya*. Complete knowledge about the form and nature of *jiva*, *maya* and *ishwar* is called *jnan*.

- Shikshapatri 103-104

Guninām gunavattāyā gneyam hyetatparam falam;
Krushne bhaktishcha satsangonyathā yānti vidopyadhaha. 9

To worship God and seek *satsang* with the God-realized Sadhu are the most outstanding qualities of a man of virtues. Without devotion and *satsang* even the learned would degenerate.

- Shikshapatri 114

29. Gordhanbhai

Gordhanbhai picks up his son instead of the clothes bag

Once Gordhanbhai was on his way to the village lake to wash his clothes. He always kept his mind focused on Maharaj. He was oblivious of everything else, so instead of

taking the clothes, he lifted his little son who was sleeping and started walking towards the lake. He was chanting, 'Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan' on his way to the lake through the bazaar. The boy started crying, but Gordhanbhai was lost in his own spiritual world and so he didn't hear him.

Then a passer-by remarked, "Gordhan! Have you gone mad! You are holding this child on your shoulder with his face downwards. He is crying bitterly, so put him down on the ground."

Gordhanbhai realized his mistake. He put his son on the ground and said, "I thought I was carrying my clothes."

So intense and deep was the devotion of Gordhanbhai that he was oblivious of everything except Shriji Maharaj.

This beloved devotee of Shriji Maharaj, Gordhanbhai, lived in Mangrol. After Ramanand Swami's departure for Dham, Shriji Maharaj had started alms distribution activities at Mangrol. Even today Gordhanbhai's big mansion stands intact there at Mangrol, revealing his prosperity.

Shriji Maharaj had visited Mangrol as Nilkanth Varni. When he was seated at Dosavav, Gordhanbhai was passing by that spot. As soon as he saw the luminous figure of Nilkanth, he was instantly drawn towards him. With folded hands he asked Varni to come for meals. Varni replied, "Bring me whatever is ready."

Gordhanbhai returned with *sata, jalebi* and other sweets. Nilkanth Varni was surprised to see the rich dishes. Gordhanbhai explained, "Today we are performing the post-death rites of my aunt, Putlibai, who was a disciple of Ramanand Swami. On account of this ceremony, the food was ready at home." Then Nilkanth Varni revealed, "Your aunt has been condemned to hell. Ramanand Swami had trusted her with some gold. She deceived him and kept it." With these words, he put Gordhanbhai in a state of samadhi in which he could see his aunt suffering in hell. When he emerged from the samadhi he prayed to Maharaj and requested that his aunt be released from hell. Maharaj granted *moksha* to Putlibai. Thus, Gordhanbhai developed conviction in Maharaj's form.

Once, Shriji Maharaj was addressing a holy assembly in Gordhanbhai's mansion. A devotee arrived, fell at the feet of Maharaj and offered him a plate of *pendas.* Shriji Maharaj turned to Gordhanbhai and said, "Serve me." Then, Gordhanbhai began eating the *pendas* himself. In no time, he finished all the *pendas.* One of the devotees wondered, "This is strange. The *pendas* were brought for Maharaj, but he did not eat them and Gordhanbhai ate them!"

Shriji Maharaj then explained, "Gordhanbhai had concentrated on me while eating. Therefore, it is as good as I having eaten them. Durvasa Rishi had finished the dishes offered by sixteen thousand one hundred and eight *gopis* while concentrating on God, and yet he was said to be observing a fast. In the same manner, this Sheth, in all the three states, looks upon his *atma* as *brahmarup* and worships me incessantly. He is a man of equanimity and to him both sugar and salt are alike."

Shriji Maharaj had said, "My true devotees are Gordhanbhai and Parvatbhai."

Then some salt and sugar were brought to Gordhanbhai. He ate both sugar and salt

thinking it was all sugar. The non-*satsangis* observed, “Gordhanbhai is in a unique spiritual state. He is above the things of this world.”

Once, Shriji Maharaj, accompanied by Muktanand Swami and other sadhus, had gone to bathe in the sea at Mangrol. Shriji Maharaj pushed Gordhanbhai into the sea and put him in samadhi while in the water. Muktanand Swami and others started lamenting, “Gordhanbhai has been drowned. What explanation shall we give to his family?” Maharaj kept him in samadhi for a long time and showed him the Varunlok. Then Maharaj snapped his finger and immediately Gordhanbhai appeared on the surface of the sea.

Another devotee from Mangrol, Anandjibhai, once approached Muktanand Swami and said, “Gordhanbhai has started business with goods worth four thousand rupees. Whosoever goes to his shop to buy things, he readily gives the goods on credit and debits the amount in his account book against Swaminarayan. Everywhere he has written nothing but ‘Debit Swaminarayan’.”

Muktanand Swami told Shriji Maharaj about this, “Gordhanbhai’s business is in very bad shape. He gives goods on credit to everyone on the name of Swaminarayan. Our prestige is at stake here.”

Shriji Maharaj replied, “Oh no! This is indeed really bad. *Samaloshtāshmakānchana* – similarly, everything has become the same to him.” Then Muktanand Swami realized that Shriji Maharaj was praising Gordhanbhai.

1. Even today, these clothes are being preserved in their family at Sundariyana.

Glossary

A

acharya head of a religious order

Akshar divine abode of God

Aksharbrahman one of the five eternal entities

Akshardham divine abode of Bhagwan Swaminarayan

Aksharmurti Aksharbrahman

anadi eternal

antahkaran conscience

arti lighted wicks

asat untruth

asatya see *asat*

Ashadh a month of Indian calendar

ashtang yoga eight steps of Yoga

Aso a month of Indian calendar

atma soul

atmabuddhi deep affection

atmanishtha self realization

avatars incarnations

Ayurveda medical science of Vedic times

B

Bania Hindu trader

bhagvati diksha initiation into a sadhu in saffron

Bhakta devotee

Bhakti devotion

Bhil name of a forest tribe

Bhumapurush the great deity

Brahma Hindu deity of creation

brahmagnan spiritual knowledge about Brahman

brahmanized God-realized

brahmarup possessing qualities similar to those of Brahma

Brahmin a person belonging to the first of the four classes of Hindu society

buddhi intellect

C

charanamrut sacred water of God's lotus feet

chintamani wish-fulfilling gem

D

darbar residence of a king or feudal ruler, traditionally with a central courtyard surrounded by rooms with verandas

darshan divine glimpse; vision

devas deities

dharma righteousness

Dharmamrut an epistle of precepts for sadhus

dudhpak thickened sweet milk

E

ekadashi eleventh day of both bright and dark halves of the month

ekantik God-realized

ekantik dharma single-minded devotion

G

gandh smell

Garasiya feudal chiefs

guna quality

guruhari God's manifestation in the form of Guru

guru preceptor

H

hari mandir temple

I

indriya sense organ e.g. eye, ear, nose

ishwar cosmic God

J

Jal Jhilani festival festival celebrated on the eleventh day of the bright half of the month of Bhadarva (Aug.-Sept.)

jalebi a sweet delicacy

Jeth a month of Indian calendar

jiva soul

jivanmukta redeemed during this very life

jnan spiritual knowledge; wisdom

jyotiswarup luminous form

K

kalpataru wish-fulfilling tree

kanthi necklace of sacred beads

karbhari administrator

karma action

Kartik a month of Indian calendar

khichdi spiced boiled rice and lentil grain

khurma *rotla* crumb

kirtan devotional song

kothla (Kathla) small earthen jar

Kumbhipak Narak hell in which the wicked are baked as in oven

M

mahant pontifical head of a mandir

mākadnu lohi blood of a bug

mama maternal uncle

Magshar a month of the Indian calendar

maund 20 kilogrammes

maya one of the five eternal realities causing bondage

Modh Vania category of the Vania community

moksh ultimate liberation

mukta liberated souls

mumukshu spiritual aspirant

mundia sadhus of Swaminarayan

murti idol, image

murti puja idol worship

murti-pratishtha consecration of *murtis*

N

Nagar a specific Brahmin community

Narayan Kavach hymn in praise of Lord Narayan

niravaran sthiti spiritual state in which one can see beyond spatio-temporal limitations.

nirlobh freedom from covetousness

nirman freedom from ego

nirvikalp nishchay firm conviction

nishchay determined faith

nishedh ban

nishkam without passion

Nishkam Shuddhi a code of conduct for celibates

nissneh non attachment

nisswad without taste

niyam moral and spiritual disciplines, and religious codes of conduct prescribed by God, the Satpurush, or the scriptures to protect a devotee on the path to God

P

paksh fellow feeling

Pancharatra a scriptural text

panch vartman five fundamental tenets

panchvishay the objects of the five sense organs

Parabrahman God-head

Param Ekantik God-realized

Paramatma God

parshad attendants

Paigamber messenger of Allah (God)

penda a kind of sweetmeat made from milk

pragat manifest

pran-pratishtha consecration of *murti*

pranam salutation, obeisance

pran vital air; breath

prasad consecrated food

pujan worship

Purna Purushottam supreme God

Purushottam Narayan supreme God

R

ras divine dance

ras rotli chapatti and mango juice

rishis sages

roop beauty

rotla bread made of millet

S

sadachar good conduct; righteous behaviour

sadguru elderly preceptor

sadhu sadhu

samadhi spiritual trance

Sampraday fellowship

samskar impressions of one's actions and desires

Sant God-realized Sadhu

sat truth

sata a sweet delicacy

sati chaste lady

Satpurush God-realized person

Satsang fellowship

satsangi members of the Fellowship

satya truth

Sethias prosperous merchants, land-lords

shabda word

shahnai an Indian musical instrument

Sheshji king of serpent race

Sheshnag king of serpent race

shikharbaddh pinnacled

Shikshapatri epistle of precepts written by Bhagwan Swaminarayan

Shruti the Vedas

Smruti code of laws and institutes

sparsh touch

stotra hymn

Suba collector

sud the bright half of a month

sudi see *sud*

swadharma dharma according to one's caste and order

Swamini Vato a scriptural text

T

Thakorji God's *murti*

tilak a U-shaped mark made on the forehead with vermilion stick

tumbdi gourd

U

upasana worship of God, with special emphasis on his greatness and glory

V

Vachanamrut a scriptural text

vad dark half of a lunar month

vadi see vad

vairagya detachment

Vaishakh a month of Indian calendar

Vaishnav one who worships Lord Vishnu

varnashram dharma duties of one's caste and order

vartman initiation

varunlok abode of Varun

vasana worldly propensities

Vasant Panchmi festival of spring

vidhi do's

vishay material pleasure

Vishwarup Darshan vision of God's infinitely great form

vivek spiritual discrimination

vrutti inclination of mind; thought arising in mind

Y

yagna sacrifice

yogamurti yoga personified